

“Shōchū at the Izakaya”

or

“Drinks in the Pub”?

**Dealing with the Foreign in the
Translation of Contemporary Japanese Fiction**

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Abstract

1. Introduction

When *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Haruki Murakami's novel from 1982, was published in the United States in 1989, Kodansha International editor Elmer Luke made a decision that would influence not only American readers' understanding of the novel, but also that of readers in several other countries. Whereas the original story was set in the late seventies, in the translation, titled *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Elmer Luke and translator Alfred Birnbaum gave the story a late eighties feel. The reason behind this radical makeover, writes Murakami scholar Jay Rubin in *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, was Elmer Luke's belief that a late eighties setting would make the novel more appealing to the international audience:

*Elmer Luke began working with Birnbaum to improve the appeal of A Wild Sheep Chase to an international readership. They removed dates and other signs linking the action to the 1970s, giving it a more contemporary feel—even going so far as to include a Reagan-era chapter title, “One for the Kipper”, that chimed with the translation’s hip new style, if not to the book’s chronology. (Set in 1978, the novel should not have contained—and does not in the original—this allusion to the famous movie line ‘Make it one for the Gipper’, which flourished during the Reagan years after 1980.)*¹

During the 1980s, Japan's economy was at its peak, and Japanese companies were buying up American companies at an increasing rate. American-Japanese relations had already been strained for a number of years due to the trade imbalance between the two nations, and Japanese buyouts of American firms only further aggravated the situation. When *A Wild Sheep Chase* was published – in its new eighties setting – it was consequently read within the context of the contemporary situation, even prompting some reviewers to suggest the novel was a critique of Japanese culture, the very culture that Americans were growing to fear and resent. In 1989, anything Japanese was sure to capture the attention of the American public; thus it is no surprise that readers welcomed the appearance of a young writer who did not seem to buy in to the “economic mystique”.²

From the aspect of marketing Haruki Murakami's work to the international audience, the decision made by Elmer Luke and Kodansha International can be deemed a successful one, but on a literary level there are several issues that must be addressed. One issue is Birnbaum's actual translation of *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Serving as the source text for subsequent

¹ Rubin (2003: 189)

² Rubin (2003: 190)

translations into many other languages – including Norwegian – it presented a distorted version of Murakami's original work to readers outside the Japan-bashing sphere. This is particularly problematic when readers do not realize that the text already has been altered to reflect Anglo-American cultural values before being translated into their language. The second issue, which constitutes the focus of this thesis, is the translation approach Birnbaum and Kodansha International adopted for *A Wild Sheep Chase*. This approach entails sacrificing aspects of the culture inherent within the original text in order to create a version that publishers deem more appealing to the target language audience. It is my firm belief that this strategy is wrong. The culture represented within any literary piece should be preserved as much as possible within the corresponding translation, both out of respect for the culture itself, and as a means of promoting cross-cultural understanding. The strategy in question also commits a grave injustice against the author's original work.

The professional translator and translology scholar Lawrence Venuti addresses these questions in his book *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995, 2008). He claims that the predominant translation approach in the Anglo-American publishing world encourages the sacrifice of linguistic and cultural differences inherent within the source text for the sake of creating a translation that reads more smoothly and resonates naturally with the reader. In short, a translation should keep the foreign elements to a minimum, and be fluent to such a degree that it seems to have been originally written in the target language. Satisfying these criteria will succeed in producing a translated text deemed acceptable by readers, reviewers and publishers alike. Venuti terms this strategy *domesticating translation*, which he considers to be a means of conforming to the mores and ideas of the receiving culture at the expense of the source culture. As an alternative to the domesticating approach, Venuti advocates what he terms *foreignizing translation*, a strategy in which the distinctive foreignness of the original text is preserved. This helps to bring the reader closer to the linguistic and cultural sphere of the source language text.

The manipulation of Haruki Murakami's *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* to suit the expectations of the American readership, and thereby to boost sales, is perhaps the best-known, and most extreme, example of the domesticating approach being used in the translation of Japanese literature. The aim of this thesis is to find out whether the domesticating approach constitutes the norm when Japanese novels are translated into English, or if there are translators who choose a more foreignizing path. By comparing a selection of translated Japanese novels with the original, I will investigate to which degree distinctively Japanese elements of each work are retained or preserved within the English translation. Are culture-specific elements deleted

or replaced by elements more familiar to target language readers, or is the foreignizing approach employed in an attempt to bring the reader closer to Japan? Or perhaps is the answer a compromise between the two methods? Although I was tempted to examine novels from each of the post-war decades, and thereby charting a possible shift in attitudes concerning translation strategies among Japanese – English translators over the years, I have decided to restrict the scope of my research to contemporary literature. What is the trend among current translators of Japanese fiction? To what degree do the various translators protect the distinctly Japanese elements of a particular piece? Do they employ the foreignizing approach, or do they seek to produce a thoroughly “localized” translation by means of the domesticating approach?

My interest in this field stems from my own background as a literary translator of Japanese fiction into Norwegian, and from a chance encounter with the works of Lawrence Venuti. It is my belief that reading a translation should simulate the sensation of traveling to a foreign country, leading the reader into the realm of the unknown. It is the responsibility of the translator and the publisher to create translations that evoke such feelings; translations that resist the natural urge to familiarize the foreign, and rather treat their readers as adults capable of absorbing and enjoying distinctly foreign elements inherent within a literary piece. This is the only way to promote genuine cultural understanding through literature.

Finally, it is my hope that this thesis can shed new light on the subject of dealing with culture-specific elements in Japanese – English literature, a field in which to date little research has been conducted.

I will use two abbreviations throughout this paper: SL for “source language” and TL for “target language”. Page numbers when quoting from the primary texts are given in order of SL text first, then TL.

2. Theory and Method

2.1 Foreignization vs. Domestication

For more than a decade, translation studies scholar Lawrence Venuti has been one of the fiercest critics of Anglo-American translation culture. He mainly targets the publishing industry, which he claims is guilty of restraining alternative translation strategies in order to produce translations that gloss over cultural differences and effectively minimize the “foreign” feel of the text. According to Venuti, a translated text tends to be judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads naturally. In short, the absence of

linguistic or stylistic peculiarities create the illusion that the translation is in fact not even a translation at all, but the actual original.³ This demand for “fluency” in turn influences translators to write texts that are not only easier to comprehend, but also adhere to the language and culture conventions of the TL audience. One way of achieving this is by eliminating culture-specific elements, thus making the text more culturally familiar and easier to read. Venuti terms this practice *domesticating translation*, or *domestication*, and claims that it constitutes an “ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values”.⁴ He also argues that it diminishes the role of the translator, making him or her “invisible” within the literary world.

Venuti insists that translators adopt what he calls a *foreignizing strategy*, or *foreignization*, as an alternative to the domesticating strategy. This means moving the reader closer to the SL culture, letting him or her experience the linguistic and cultural differences rather than glossing over them. The foreign in the SL text is emphasized, and therefore shielded from the dominance of the TL culture. Adopting a foreignizing strategy also means refusing to succumb to prevailing expectations regarding fluency, thus enabling the translator to assert his or her own presence as a “visible” agent in the actual translation process.

Ethical motives are unquestionably the main driving force behind Venuti’s campaign to promote foreignization. He seeks to “develop a theory and practice of translation that resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text”.⁵ He also believes that by promoting a deeper understanding of the SL culture, the foreignizing approach prevents a literary piece from being dominated by ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism.⁶

Venuti’s ideas regarding foreignization and domestication have been the source of much debate over the past decade or so. Critics such as Douglas Robinson have argued that translations done according to foreignizing principles produce pompous and insincere English, and are “necessarily elitist, exclusionary of popular readership”.⁷

In addition to preserving the culture-specific elements of the SL culture, Venuti’s foreignizing translation strategy involves the use of “poststructural strategies that foreground the play of the signifier, puns, neologisms, archaisms, dialects, satire, fragmented syntax, and experimental forms, all of which result in discontinuous, fragmented, and less than unified

³ Venuti (2008: 1)

⁴ Venuti (2008: 15)

⁵ Venuti (2008: 18)

⁶ Venuti (2008: 16)

⁷ Robinson (1997: 96, 105–106)

final texts.”⁸ These techniques make the TL text read less fluently, thereby highlighting the translator’s work and encouraging a reappraisal of his or her status as a facilitator, rather than simply that of a copyist. However, this aspect of foreignization lies beyond the scope of my analyses for this thesis. My primary concern is to address the manner in which Japanese culture-specific elements are treated in English language translations. Are they retained and emphasized in a manner that is consistent with the aims of the foreignizing approach, or do translators try to assimilate them into the TL culture by means of the domesticating strategy, which Venuti claims to be the predominant method pervading Anglo-American translation culture?

2.2 Japanese Literature in Translation

Although English translations of Japanese literature first appeared more than a century ago, it was not until the mid-1950s that Japanese literature became popular amongst the English-speaking audience. In the aftermath of the American occupation and the rapid transformation of Japan from enemy to important ally, US publishers decided the time was right to introduce more Japanese literature to the American public. With a vast pool of writers to choose from, publishers could have easily explored the diversity of the contemporary Japanese literary scene, but seeking to create a new and exotic image of Japan, they focused instead on a few selected writers that could help promote this new image. Tanizawa, Kawabata, and Mishima were the three writers who profited the most, seeing several of their novels translated. Kawabata would even go on to win the Nobel Prize in 1968. Unfortunately, literature that did not fit the prescribed formula, such as proletarian novels, or novels that portrayed a more westernized Japan, was largely ignored by the major publishers.⁹ The US publishing industry, and the few academic specialists who contributed in selecting and translating the novels, essentially shaped the Japanese literary canon in English. Edward Fowler writes, “I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the conception of Japanese literature became fixed for American readers by the emergence of this triumvirate”.¹⁰ Fowler also argues that these three writers are used as the implicit standard against which any other translated Japanese text is measured. In short, their novels have come to be regarded as representative of the “typical” Japanese novel.

⁸ Gentzler (2001: 39)

⁹ Fowler (1992: 11)

¹⁰ Fowler (1992: 8)

Lawrence Venuti, who is generally critical of the publishing industry for its tendency to choose for translation literary works that are easily assimilated into the TL culture, sides with Fowler on this issue, writing that “this case shows that even when translation projects reflect the interests of a specific cultural constituency – here an elite group of academic specialists and literary publishers – the resulting image of the foreign culture may still achieve national dominance”.¹¹ He concludes that this network of translators and institutions chose texts that reflected the American nostalgia for an exotic pre-war Japan, and marginalized texts that were inconsistent with this stereotype.¹²

The canon of translated Japanese literature established in the 50s and 60s was not really challenged until the late 80s and early 90s, when several anthologies of modern Japanese fiction, including *Monkey Brain Sushi* (1991, edited by Alfred Birnbaum) and *New Japan Voices* (1991, edited by Helen Mitsios), helped pave the way for writers such as Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto. The fiction of these post-war-born Japanese writers presented the Anglo-American public with images of a different Japan, imbued with modern themes and settings far removed from those portrayed in the works of Tanizaki, Kawabata, and Mishima. The publication of these anthologies and the works of Murakami and Yoshimoto arguably contributed in changing the image of Japan in the West.

Following the breakthrough of Murakami and Yoshimoto, an increasing number of contemporary Japanese writers have been translated into English, some representing previously unpublished genres such as horror and science fiction. In recent years, independent publishers such as Alma Books and Vertical¹³ have played a part in furthering this development, releasing a wide range of both mainstream and alternative Japanese novels.

2.3 Method and Material

Translatology scholar Mona Baker describes culture-specific elements in the following manner:

The SL word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete, it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food.¹⁴

¹¹ Venuti (1998: 73)

¹² Venuti (1998: 82)

¹³ <http://www.almabooks.co.uk/> <http://www.vertical-inc.com>

¹⁴ Baker (1992: 21)

Culture-specific elements are elements in the SL text that pose unique challenges when translating a particular work due to the inherent differences between the respective SL and TL cultures. These include proper nouns, physical objects, words related to religion or folklore, institutions and other concepts in the SL text for which no words or expression exists within the culture of the TL audience. The greater the differences between the respective SL and TL cultures, the more difficult it is to translate these culture-specific elements. In theory, a Japanese novel should therefore tax the imagination of an English translator more than a German or French novel would.

As we live in a truly global society, it is no surprise that over the years an increasing number of Japanese words have been incorporated into the English lexicon. *Samurai*, *geisha*, *kabuki*, *noh*, *kamikaze*, *karate*, and *sumo* were adopted following the 1868 Meiji Restoration and Japan's opening to the West, while in recent years the increased flow of information and cultural exchange has led to a new influx of Japanese words. Relatively modern phenomena such as *karaoke*, *manga*, *anime*, *otaku*, *yakuza*, and *sudoku* have all been added to recent editions of the Oxford dictionary, and more words and expressions are sure to follow. These words, however, constitute a rather small portion of culture-specific elements that translators wrestle with as they work to recreate a literary work within the framework of an entirely different language and culture. The Japanese language possesses a large catalogue of words that do not translate easily into English, mainly due to the significant differences between Japanese and Anglo-American culture. These words range from physical items, such as food and furniture, to words that refer to religion, places, brands, traditional practices or other culture-specific phenomena. There is also the issue of social hierarchy and how this is reflected within the Japanese language. In the Japanese, the speaker adjusts the language to reflect his or her relationship to the individual they are addressing. In contrast to English, this is done through the use of special verbs and honorific expressions. While this is a concept with which English language readers may struggle to identify, completely omitting such an important fabric of Japanese thought would be a grave injustice to the author's vision, and essentially deny readers a chance to examine the inner-workings of the Japanese mind.

The primary focus of this thesis will address the manner in which words and phenomena culturally specific to Japan are translated in a selection of literary works. In order to categorize the different techniques used, I will apply the Swedish translation studies scholar Göte Klingberg's *ways to effect cultural context adaptation*, a set of cultural concept adaptation techniques introduced in his 1986 book *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the*

Translators. Similar methods by other scholars also exist, but I feel that Klingberg's is most conducive to the aims of my research.

After careful consideration, I decided to do my research on the following five novels:

Kasha, by Miyuki Miyabe – *All She Was Worth*, translation by Alfred Birnbaum

Batoru Rowaiaru, by Koushun Takami – *Battle Royale*, translation by Yuji Oniki

Umibe no Kafuka, by Haruki Murakami – *Kafka on the Shore*, translation by Philip Gabriel

Kicchin, by Banana Yoshimoto – *Kitchen*, translation by Megan Backus

Hebi ni Piasu, by Hitomi Kanehara – *Snakes and Earrings*, translation by David Karashima

I considered a number of other novels as well, but decided to focus on these five works because they fulfill all the requirements I had set when establishing the scope my research. First, I wanted to examine recent translations, preferably from the nineties and onward, and done by a selection of both established and up-and-coming translators. The five translations were all published between 1993 and 2005, and were done by three relatively well-known translators and two less established ones. Furthermore, I wanted the novels to represent a broad range of genres, featuring both male and female writers. The five novels above meet all of these requirements.

When conducting my research, I did parallel close readings of the SL and TL texts, continually taking comprehensive notes on the culture-context adaptation of every culture-bound word found in the SL texts. There is not enough space to analyze all of them in this thesis, but they will all be taken into consideration in my concluding analysis for each respective translation.

2.4 Göte Klingberg's *Cultural concept adaptation categories*

To show how the culture-specific elements I found in the source texts are dealt with in their respective translations, I opted to use Göte Klingberg's model for cultural concept adaptation, as described in his 1986 book *Children's fiction in the hands of the translators*. During his own extensive examination of children's books translated from Swedish to English, Klingberg identified *nine different ways of implementing cultural context adaptation*. Of these nine strategies, some are consistent with the foreignizing approach, while others exhibit domesticating. Below this will be explained in detail.

Although Klingberg's field of study was children's literature, I believe that his methods are suitable when analyzing translations of general literature as well. Klingberg himself wrote:

It is of course impossible to define a clear boundary between the problems of translating a book for children and a book for adults. In many respects a translation of a children's book will offer the same problems as any translation. It could even be held that there should be no distinction.¹⁵

2.4.1 Different ways to effect cultural context adaptation¹⁶

A cultural concept is considered to be adapted when it is translated in accordance with one of the methods listed below. To illustrate these various methods, I will draw upon examples that lie outside the scope of my own research.

Added explanation

The cultural element in the source text is retained but a short explanation is added within the translated text. Example: The sentence "Yukio Mishima committed hara-kiri in 1970", which has one culture-bound proper noun, *Yukio Mishima*, and one culture-bound common noun, *hara-kiri*, should be easy to understand for anyone with an above average knowledge of Japanese culture. However, other readers might think "*Who did what in 1970?*", and may require more information to better understand what is being said. Using added explanation as a means for cultural context adaptation, the translated sentence could read: "The famous writer Yukio Mishima committed the ritual suicide hara-kiri in 1970".

Added explanation can be a very effective way of bridging the perceptual differences that exist between the SL and TL text reader without losing the cultural element. Nevertheless, if this method is applied wrongly, it could give the text a somewhat unnatural feel. If the added explanation appears in a dialogue between two Japanese – to whom the cultural element should need no explanation – it can feel especially out of place.

Rewording

What the source text says is expressed but without use of the cultural element. Example: The sentence "The real-estate agent showed me a six, an eight, and a ten jō room", in which the size of the rooms is given in *jō*, an old *shakkanhō* measurement unit, could be cultural context adapted in several ways. One way to avoid *jō* would be to use rewording: "The real-estate

¹⁵ Klingberg (1986: 10)

¹⁶ Klingberg (1986: 18)

agent showed me a small, a medium, and a large room”. In this translation the essence of the SL text is kept, but without using the cultural element *jō*. I think rewording as a means of explanation is acceptable if it preserves the underlying meaning of the SL text, but it might also result in a less precise sentence, as is the case with the example above.

Explanatory translation

The function or use of the cultural element is given instead of the foreign name for it. In his book *Eigo ni natta Nippon shōsetsu*, which examines English translations of Japanese novels, Japanese writer and translator Minami Aoyama’s comments regarding a passage from Ryū Murakami’s novel 69 provide a good example of an explanatory translation. In this passage, a running coach called Kawasaki bears an uncanny resemblance to Sanpei Hayashiya (林家三平 1925-1980), a Japanese comedian who is likely to be unknown to most people outside Japan. In the translation, the phrase “(Kawasaki) looks exactly like Sanpei Hayashiya” is replaced by “(Kawasaki) had a square head, curly hair, and short but powerful legs”. This is an example of explanatory translation: the translator describes Sanpei Hayashiya’s physical attributes instead of using the comedian’s name.¹⁷

As with rewording, explanatory translation is one of the more desirable methods if a cultural context adaptation is deemed necessary. If wisely used it can convey the connotative values of the source culture element, while also offering a means to prevent the intrusion of target culture concepts. However, as with added explanation, it can sound awkward at times, especially in dialogue between people who require no explanation of the cultural element.

Explanation outside the text

The explanation may be given in the form of a footnote, a preface or the like. The use of footnotes is more common in academic writing, but it does occur in translation of literary texts as well. Edward G. Seidensticker (1921-2007), translator of famous works such as Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata’s novels, used footnotes frequently, like in *The Makioka Sisters*, his translation of Jun’ichirō Tanizaki’s 1957 novel *Sasameyuki* (細雪). Example: The sentence “Remember the tongue-cut sparrow*, Etsuko?” is accompanied by the footnote **Of a well-known Japanese fairy-tale.*¹⁸

Some people find extensive use of footnotes in translation intrusive and annoying, or visually undesirable, so the general attitude among translators seems to be that they should be

¹⁷ Aoyama (1996:35)

¹⁸ Tanizaka (1957: 88)

used sparingly. The use of a preface or a vocabulary list offers a means to solve the dilemma of visual distractions within the text, but readers would still have to pause from their reading to refer to the explanations at the beginning or the end of the book. On the other hand, placing explanations outside of the text spares the reader from reading rather awkward sentences that occur when explanations are placed *inside* the text.

Substitution of an equivalent in the culture of the target language

The culture-specific element is changed into something of equal status in the target language culture. Translators adopt the stance that the text would read more fluently if the sentence referred to a familiar figure within the TL culture. Example: In 69, the afore-mentioned novel by Ryū Murakami, a reference to Japanese actress Ruriko Asaoka (浅丘 ルリ子, 1940 –) becomes a reference to French actress Brigitte Bardot in the English translation.¹⁹ Presumably, the translator has concluded that Brigitte Bardot evokes the same associations for TL readers as Ruriko Asaoka does for SL readers. Since both were highly popular and held in similar regard by their respective cultures during the sixties, this can be classified as a substitution of an equivalent.

If literature is to have an impact on the understanding of foreign cultures and serve as a vehicle for introducing foreign concepts to the target culture, these kinds of substitutions should be used with care.

Substitution of a rough equivalent in the culture of the target language

The culture-specific element is changed into something of roughly the same status in the target language culture. In *Translating Murakami*, an email roundtable with Haruki Murakami translators Philip Gabriel and Jay Rubin, and Murakami's American editor Gary Fisketjon, Gabriel tells of how the Japanese restaurant chain Royal Host becomes the American chain Denny's in his own English language translation of the Murakami story *Man-eating Cats*. Gabriel had intended to leave it as it was, but Murakami himself, fearing that Royal Host would be unfamiliar to Western readers, requested that it be changed to Denny's. There are similarities between these two chains, but they are not quite the same, as Gabriel points out: "Royal Host, though, is a pretty nice chain of restaurants, often found in the major airports as well as elsewhere, and a step above Denny's, I think. So this is an example of 'rough equivalent'".²⁰

¹⁹ Aoyama (1996: 37)

²⁰ http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/murakami/desktop_7.html

Another example of a rough equivalent being used in Japanese-English translation is the substitution of the Japanese liquor *shōchū* for the Western drink *gin* in Donald Keene's translation of one of Osamu Dazai's novels. The purpose of this substitution can only be to "protect" the target text reader from "difficult" foreignness for the sake of creating a "smoother" reading experience. A strategy like this not only leads to misconceptions of the source culture in the target culture, it also serves as a gross example of the translator underestimating his readership. Antoine Berman, who in some ways can be regarded as Lawrence Venuti's predecessor, claims that the use of equivalents represents a form of "ethno-centricism".²¹ Michael Emmerich, one of the younger translators of Japanese literature, used a clever added explanation to deal with *shōchū* when translating Mari Akasaka's *Vibrator*: "Shōchū, pretty strong stuff".²²

Simplification

A more general concept is used instead of a specific one. Example: The Japanese mostly drink green tea (*ocha*), but they also like oolong tea (*ūroncha*), konbucha (*kobucha/konbucha*) and black tea (*kōcha*). Translating "black tea" as "tea" would work, but if the same "tea" is then used for *ocha* (of which there are numerous variants) *kobucha*, and *ūroncha*, the translation becomes overly simplified. The distinction between the types of tea is eliminated in favour of a more general concept.

Unlike the methods involving the substitution of an equivalent, simplification does not introduce target culture elements into the text, but rather sidesteps the difficult culture-bound elements by replacing them with more neutral or general concepts. This loss of foreign elements not only produces a translation that is less colourful, it also signifies a reluctance on the translator or editor's part to produce source orientated texts, preferring instead a fluent target orientated approach.

Deletion

Words, sentences, paragraphs or chapters are deleted. As was the case with Haruki Murakami's novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*²³, translators are sometimes asked to abridge the texts they are working on, either as a means to save money or as a way of adapting the text for a foreign readership. In the case of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, the omissions were

²¹ Berman (2004: 276–289)

²² Akasaka (2005: 43)

²³ <http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/murakami/complete.html>

ordered because the novel was considered far too long, a fate not uncommon for Japanese novels in translation. Editors will call for plots to be tightened, sub-plots erased, and “unnecessary” information removed, all to suit the literary tastes of the receiving culture. As I will show, one of the texts examined for this thesis has been subjected to this kind of editing.

Omitting text as a means of reducing the foreign also occurs. Cultural context adaptation through *deletion* occurs when a word, a sentence, a paragraph, or a chapter is omitted in order to avoid the foreign elements in the source language text. The only justification for the use of this strategy is as a last-resort measure in cases where no other cultural context adaptation methods are applicable, and where no significant meaning is lost; in all other instances use of this method should be avoided.

Klingberg’s ninth way of effecting cultural context adaptation, *localization* – through which the whole cultural setting of the source text is moved closer to the readers of the source text – is more common in Hollywood remakes of foreign movies than in translation of books for adults, so I have chosen not to include it here.

Of the eight cultural context adaptation methods listed above, substitution of an equivalent/rough equivalent in the target language, simplification, and deletion can be considered target language oriented, or domesticating, approaches, as they sacrifice elements of the source language culture. Klingberg considers the use of these methods a violation of the source text, and recommends that translators try to explain the difficult cultural elements rather than sacrifice them. This can be achieved through foreignizing methods, such as added explanation, rewording, explanatory translation, or explanation outside the text.²⁴

2.5 Use of a loan

Instead of using cultural context adaptation strategies, translators can leave the culture-bound word or expression in its original form. In short, they neither explain the meaning of the culture-bound element, substitute it for an equivalent in the target language, simplify it nor delete it. This strategy helps preserve the foreign flavour of the SL text, thus creating a more foreignized TL text. It does, however, assume that the TL reader has a certain level of knowledge regarding the SL culture. The inclusion of too many foreign words could arguably disrupt the reading experience for some readers, to the point that they become an annoyance. It has not been established clearly as to who the actual readers of Japanese literature in

²⁴ Klingberg (1986: 19)

translation actually are²⁵, so some will surely have more prior knowledge of Japanese culture than others. Regardless, this should be a secondary concern. Retaining the foreign flavour, and consequently raising cultural awareness, is of greater importance. Andrew Chesterman calls the practice of leaving a culture-bound word in its original form without any adaptation the *use of a loan*²⁶, and I will adopt his terminology for the purposes of this paper.

3. Results and analyses

3.1 *Kasha* / *All She Was Worth* - Miyuki Miyabe

3.1.1 Background

Miyuki Miyabe (宮部みゆき, born 1960) is one of the most popular contemporary Japanese fiction writers and the recipient of several literary awards, including the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize in 1993 for *Kasha* (火車, published in 1992) and the Naoki Prize for *Riyū* (理由 – *The reason*) in 1998. Although she has published books across a number of different genres, she is most widely known as a writer of mystery fiction. It has been claimed that the critical and commercial success of *Kasha* is one of the main reasons behind the dramatic increase in women crime mystery writers in Japan in recent years.²⁷

Kasha focuses on Tokyo Metropolitan Police Detective Shunsuke Honma's search for the missing fiancée of a distant relative. The fiancée, as it soon turns out, has stolen someone else's identity to get out of financial difficulties. In many respects, *Kasha* follows the pattern of a classic mystery novel, with the protagonist looking for clues in different locations and trying to get the pieces to fit, but the novel can also be read as a criticism of the consumer-oriented Japanese society, its lax attitude towards credit cards, debt, and also the aggressiveness with which debt is collected.

Kasha was the first of Miyabe's works to be published in English (*All She Was Worth*, 1999), and it received decent reviews in the US.²⁸ The translator is Alfred Birnbaum, the American who helped launch Haruki Murakami in the West. Murakami himself likes

²⁵ Fowler (1992: 3)

²⁶ Chesterman (1997: 94)

²⁷ Seaman (2004: 1)

²⁸ <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9802E0DE153CF935A25751C0A961958260>
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1997/03/16/RV63286.DTL>

Birnbaum as a translator, but also admits that Birnbaum does things his own way and sometimes is not too concerned with accuracy.²⁹

3.1.2 Culture-context adaptation in the translation

Kasha contains perhaps the highest number of culture-specific elements of all the novels examined. It is rich in references to Japanese popular culture, literature, religion, home furnishings, food, geographical places, and society in general, and some of these culture-specific elements are extremely difficult to translate. Many, as I will show, are dealt with through deletion, simplification and the substitution of an equivalent, making *All She Was Worth* the most domestication-oriented of the translations included in this paper.

In terms of culture-context adaptation, the most striking aspect of *All She Was Worth* is the high number of deletions and simplifications in the text. For proper nouns alone, 17 cases of deletion were found:

Word deleted	Meaning	Page
セゾン (Saison)	Japanese business corporation	181/100
高島屋 (Takashimaya)	Japanese department store	181/100
マイルドセブン (Mild Seven)	Japanese cigarette brand	447/233
赤福 (Akafuku)	Famous brand of Japanese confectionary	421/221
チャーハン (Chahan)	Fried rice	509/261
甲州街道 (Kōshū-kaidō)	Name of road	60/37
小滝橋通り (Kotaki-dōri)	Name of road	60/37
新宿駅前 (Shinjuku eki-mae)	In front of Shinjuku station	72/43
南青山 (Minami-Aoyama)	Area in Tokyo	116/65
方南町 (Hōnanchō)	Area in Tokyo	116/65
川口南町 2 - 5 - 2 (2-5-2 Minami-machi, Kawaguchi)	Address in Saitama prefecture	143/79
渋谷のハチ公 (Shibuya no Hachikō)	Name of a statue of a dog in Shibuya, Tokyo. It is perhaps the most famous meeting spot in Japan.	230/127
三重県 (Mie-ken)	Mie prefecture	421/220
賢島 (Kashikojima)	A Japanese island	424/222
小幡 (Obata)	A neighbourhood in the city of Nagoya	464/240
新宿 (Shinjuku)	One of the most famous areas in central Tokyo	537/274
昭和 (Shōwa)	Period of Japanese history (1926-89) corresponding to the reign of Emperor Shōwa	176/97

Many of the proper nouns above are geographical names, and should not present problems for any translator, so it is likely that Birnbaum omitted them in order to reduce the amount of

²⁹ Murakami/Shibata (2000: 18)

foreign words in the TL text, thus making it read more fluently. I think it is a regrettable strategy by the translator. The extensive deletion of geographical names not only goes against the original text, it serves to deny the TL reader full participation, destroying the geographical references necessary for them to follow the journey of the protagonist around Tokyo and to other locales across Japan.

In addition to the proper nouns listed above, other culture-specific elements have also suffered deletion in *All She Was Worth*:

SL Text	Meaning	Page
和室 (Washitsu)	Japanese style room, fitted with tatami mats	210/116
座敷 (Zashiki) ³⁰	Same as <i>washitsu</i> , except that it is commonly used when referring to rooms in restaurants etc	302/163 436/227
本籍 (Honseki)	Legal address on the family registry	55/34
ゴールデンウィーク (Golden Week)	A succession of public holidays from April 29 th to May 5 th – a popular time to travel in Japan	424/222

A significant number of geographical names are also culture-context adapted through simplification or explanatory translation. Whereas the SL text often specifies a geographic location down to the name of the neighbourhood, the TL text is usually less detailed. What should have been “Dōgenzaka in Shibuya”, becomes “near Shibuya” (55/34), “Misaki in Chiyoda” becomes “in Chiyoda” (56/34), and “Toranomom in Minato” is reduced to “near Minato” (56/34). These are examples of simplification.

On a couple of occasions, the geographical reference is left out altogether. “Transferred to Yokohama” becomes “transferred elsewhere” (291/156), and “moved to Fukuoka” is reduced to “moved out of town” (327/176). Even more questionable, perhaps, is Birnbaum’s decision to swap a reference to the Tokyo area of *Yotsuya* with the more familiar *Shibuya* (16/13), thus actually relocating the workplace of the character in question. In two other simplifying moves, a reference to *Edo* is modernized to *Tokyo*, the former capital’s current name (235/129), and a person from the *Kansai* area of Japan becomes someone from *Osaka* (234/129), presumably because it is more familiar to TL readers.

A less severe, but still questionable practice that frequently occurs in *All She Was Worth* is the substitution of geographical names with an explanatory translation. A reference to a place

³⁰ It should be noted, however, that the TL text compensates for the loss of *zashiki* on page 227 by adding “tatami-matted area” to the text later on the same page.

called *Katsushika* in the prefecture of Saitama (14/12), for instance, is simply translated as “north of the city”, with “city” referring to Tokyo. The following is another example:

- 本間の家のある常磐線の金町から、山手線の新宿駅へ出て行くのに (253)
- Going with the Jōban Line from Kanamachi, where Honma’s house is, to Shinjuku station, where the Yamanote line stops ... (Literal translation.)
- ... to get to the center of Tokyo from the suburb where Honma lived ... (138)

Although I agree with Birnbaum that the SL sentence is too intricate to be translated literally, I feel that his solution is too liberal. Shinjuku might be in the centre of Tokyo, but so are many other places as well, and reducing Kanamachi to simply “a suburb” denies the TL reader information regarding the home of Detective Honma. Given there are no less than five proper nouns in the SL sentence, the decision to sacrifice the names of the train lines is more understandable, but for the sake of reference the geographical names should have been kept. In order to keep the connotative value of “Kanamachi” and “Shinjuku”, Birnbaum could have used added explanation instead of explanatory translation. For example: “To get to downtown Shinjuku from the suburb of Kanamachi, where Honma lived, ...”

The characteristics or location of an area are used instead of the geographical name for it on five other occasions as well:

SL text	TL text	Page
南青山(Minami-Aoyama)	Fashionable part of town	106/60
稲荷町(Inarichō)	East-side trading district	159/87
茗荷谷駅(Myōgadani)	North central Tokyo	419/219
荒川(Arakawa)	East side of Tokyo	426/223
九州弁(Kyūshū-ben)	A southern accent	237/131

As in the first example, I think that the use of an added explanation would have been a better solution in these cases, since it allows for both the foreign word and the connotative value to be retained in the TL text. The translator has used this technique on other occasions when dealing with geographical references, and in my opinion, it works well. In the following examples, the information explaining the geographical name is found in the translation only, serving as a guide to readers who are unfamiliar with the geography of Japan (added explanations in *italics*):

- Jun lived in Funabashi, *way out in the suburbs east of Tokyo*. (14/12)
- *Not far from here*. In the Suginami district, an apartment in Honancho. (23/16)
- *A few hours*³¹ *north of Tokyo*, from Utsunomiya. (23/16)
- Marunouchi *business district*. (291/157)
- Fukushima, *up in the north*. (355/190)
- *The vineyards of Kofu*. (426/223)

However, simplification is not exclusively reserved for dealing with geographical names. It is also used to deal with other culture-specific elements.

The game console *Famikon*³² is one of Japanese entertainment giant Nintendo's most popular products ever. In *All She Was Worth*, this best-selling eighties game console has been reduced to the general concept "computer" (164/90). Since *Famikon*, or the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) as it is known as outside Japan, is famous all over the world, I cannot see the need for any kind of cultural context adaptation to be used – especially not one as domesticating as simplification. Translating *Famikon* to "NES" or "Nintendo" would have preserved the reference to one of the most iconic Japanese inventions of all time, without confusing any TL readers.

Another case worth examining is the treatment of "noodles" in the translation. To many westerners, noodles are noodles, not matter what shape they come in, but not so for the Japanese. The three most popular types of noodle are *ramen*, *soba*, and *udon*, each with its own distinctive characteristics. In *All She Was Worth*, however, *soba* and *udon* are both translated as "noodle" (216/119 and 158/86), meaning that this distinction is completely lost on the TL reader. The use of an added explanation, such as "soba noodles", would have been a better option in this case. Other examples of the inappropriate use of a simplification were:

- The use of the more general "the news" for a reference to the news broadcast of NHK, Japan's public broadcaster (14/2)
- The use of the generic "office party" for the traditional Japanese *Bōnenkai*, or "year-end party" (51/31)
- The use of the more general "department store" instead of its name *Marui* (254/139)
- The use of "outbound train" instead of *Jōban Line* (5/7)

³¹ "A few hours" is an exaggeration. It is possible to get from central Tokyo to Utsunomiya in less than one hour by train.

³² Short for "family computer".

- The use of the generic “women’s magazines” for the name of the magazine *Hanako* (408/215)

In addition to deletions and simplifications, *All She Was Worth* also contains several examples of another domesticating culture-context adaptation technique: substitution of an equivalent. The most striking instance concerns an attempt to deal with a literary reference in the SL text:

- 「俺か？俺は明智小五郎だ」 (204)
- “Me? I am Kogorō Akechi” (Literal translation)
- “Me? Why, I’m Sherlock Holmes, of course!” (113)

Kogorō Akechi is a fictional character who appears in many of Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Rampo’s (1894-1965) stories, and he is said to be based on Arthur Conan Doyle’s private detective Sherlock Holmes. Considering that it evokes similar associations in the TL culture as Kogorō Akechi does in the SL culture, the use of Sherlock Holmes as an equivalent is a clever one. Nevertheless, since a SL concept is sacrificed in favour of one belonging to the TL culture, it is still a domesticating choice that moves the reader away from the SL culture and into a more familiar sphere. It would perhaps have been a better option to use an added explanation, such as “Me? Why, I’m the famous detective Kogorō Akechi, of course!”

One of the Japanese words that have recently become part of the English vocabulary is *anime*, but even this loan word is sacrificed for an equivalent in *All She Was Worth*:

- おそろいのアニメのキャラクターがついた運動靴をはいている。 (270)
- They wore matching anime character patterned trainers. (Literal translation)
- ... and Honma noticed their matching cartoon-patterned sneakers. (146)

In Japan, the term *anime* refers to animated films of any style and origin, whereas in English usage the term commonly denotes animated films originating from Japan. The visual style of *anime* easily distinguishes it from Western animated films (unless deliberately drawn in an anime style), or “cartoons” as they are also known. The term is firmly established in the vocabulary of not only English, but other languages as well. In this context, it is not possible to determine whether the term *anime* refers to a domestic or foreign animated movie, so the use of “cartoon” is not wrong on a lexical level. The connotative values of *anime* and

“cartoon” are vastly different, however, in that *anime* is likely to conjure images of characters from Japanese animated films, like *Astro Boy* or *Doraemon*, whereas “cartoon” might give rise to images of *Bugs Bunny* or *Tom and Jerry*. I firmly believe that *anime* should be kept as a loan – as it is in *Battle Royale* (40/41 and 473/439) – unless it specifically refers to an animated movie of non-Japanese origin. Non-domesticating cultural context adaptation, like added explanation, should not be necessary either – bearing in mind the established position of “anime” in the English language.

In the passage below, we have an example of a Japanese cultural element being replaced not by an equivalent in the TL language, but by something completely different:

- あたし、将来結婚するとき、お色直しでドレスの代わりに、くいだおれ人形と同じカッコしてもええだろう？ (487)
- ... when I get married some day, instead of wearing a wedding dress I'll come as Rambo (252)

In the SL sentence, the female character states that (if X is true) she will dress up like *Kuidaore ningyō* at her own wedding. *Kuidaore ningyō*³³ (“Cuidaore doll”) is a doll that for 58 years was placed outside a restaurant in Osaka to attract customers. It became so popular that it is now regarded as an important symbol of the city of Osaka. The doll is a man playing a drum, dressed in an outfit resembling that of a circus clown. This being as far from “Rambo” as one can possibly get, I am inclined to believe that Birnbaum simply picked the action movie character at random. *Kuidaore ningyō* is, of course, totally unknown outside Japan, and conveying its connotations without the use of a lengthy added explanation or footnote, is more or less impossible. Still, the use of “Rambo” is totally irrelevant and fails to draw a suitable parallel. Anything Japanese – “samurai” for instance – would have been better.

One explanatory translation worth mentioning in *All She Was Worth* is an attempt by Birnbaum to convey the connotative value of the Japanese word *manshon* (“mansion”):

- 狭いし、日当たりは良くないし、マンションではない (98)
- It's small, it doesn't get much sunlight, and it's not a *manshon*. (Literal translation)
- And small and dark. And, chances were, poorly insulated. (56)

³³ Also known as *Kuidaore Tarō*

The problem with the Japanese word *manshon* is that it is not an equivalent of the English word “mansion”, but rather a term the Japanese has coined for a modern, expensive apartment in a sturdy multi-storey concrete building, often with a communal secure gate and an elevator. An *apaato* (from English, “apartment”), on the other hand, refers to an older, cheaper apartment in a lower building without a central security system. The SL text stating that the apartment in question is “not a *manshon*”, implies that it is an *apaato*, and thus inferior in quality. One of the qualities it might lack, is proper insulation, so the explanatory translation “poorly insulated” manages to capture one of the connotative values inherent in the SL phrase “マンションではない / it’s not a *manshon*”. As far as explanatory explanations go, this is a rather good one, I think.

All She Was Worth is not *all* deletions, simplifications and substitution of equivalents. Some culture-bound words, such as *futon*, *Caster Mild*, *sashimi*, and *yakuza*, have been kept as loans, and there are a number of added explanations in the text as well. Some of them are short and effective, such as (added explanation in italics):

- Hibachi *braziers* (436/227)
- Yamanote Line *commuter loop* (14/12)
- (Keihin Tohoku Line) is a Tokyo-area train; *runs between Yokohama and Tokyo and then north to Saitama, right?* (511/262)
- Hana Matsuri, *the Buddha’s birthday. April 8* (472/244)
- Ise Shrine, *the most sacred site in the Shinto religion* (421/221)
- Oden *hotpot* (519/266)

Others again are lengthier, and the one page explanation of how the Japanese family register (*koseki*) works (112/61-62), is longer than any other added explanation I encountered during the course of my research. Considering how reluctant Birnbaum is to use explanations elsewhere, the length of the *koseki* explanation is somewhat surprising. Placed in the middle of a conversation, it also feels slightly intrusive and out of place. It is obvious that the narrator is speaking to TL readers, and the explanation sounds wooden and forced. This is pointed out in the review of the translation at Complete-review.com: “... and the attempts to explain many of the social and policy issues -- personal debt, debt collection, personal identity in Japan -- often come across as fairly wooden.”³⁴ In other words, the decision to add such a

³⁴ <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/japannew/miyabem1.htm>

lengthy explanation to the novel has actually damaged the reputation of the work itself. Antoine Berman has warned against such elaborate explanations, claiming that overdoing the translation potentially interferes with the rhythm of the text.³⁵ So why did Birnbaum decide to write this explanation? The *koseki* system plays a vital part in the novel, and it is clear that understanding how it works is necessary in order to understand the novel. The explanation might feel intrusive and sound wooden, but bearing in mind the importance of *koseki* in the plot, Birnbaum's decision can be justified.

Two references to the world of hostessing are quite smoothly dealt with through added explanations:

- 水商売の方向へそれることもなく (26)
- (She) didn't end up in the water trade world. (Literal translation)
- Not drifting toward hostessing like so many girls did these days, even if the nightclub world – the “water trade,” as it was known – did mean easy money. (18)

Mizushōbai, or “the water trade”, is a traditional euphemism for the night-time entertainment world in Japan; in particular the establishments where girls are paid to entertain the customers at the table (hostess clubs etc.). A literal translation would obviously not make much sense to TL readers, so the choice to explain what the water trade is about is completely valid. The assumption that it is “easy money” refers to the fact that it pays better than most other jobs available for young girls with little more than a high school education.

There are many kinds of hostess clubs in Japan, ranging from cheap, rundown places to high-class clubs in the Ginza area where guests are not allowed in without being recommended by a regular customer. A *sunakku*, or “snack”, is one of the cheaper places, and there are several references to it in *Kasha*. The first time it is simplified into “little hole-in-the-wall drinking places” (38/24), but later the concept is explained:

- 彼女はスナックで働いていましたよ。銀座か新橋か、とにかくあの辺の店だったと思います。(81)
- She was working at a snack. In Ginza or Shimbashi, I think. In that area anyway. (Literal translation)

³⁵ Berman (2004: 288–89)

- ... she was working at a ‘snack’. In Ginza or Shimbashi, I forget which, but anyway, one of those hole-in-the-wall places where girls sit at your table and pour you drinks. (46)

This example shows how effective an added explanation can be. The Japanese cultural element “snack” is kept, and the concept is explained. The translation stays true to the culture of the SL text, while at the same time teaching the TL reader something about that culture.

3.1.2.1 Religious references

References to religions prominent in the SL culture, but not in the TL culture, can pose a number of difficulties when conducting a translation. In Japan, Buddhism and Shinto are the main religions, and with them come a vast array of physical objects, concepts, customs and practices that are likely to be unfamiliar to non-Japanese, and for which satisfactory English translations might not exist. On one occasion, Birnbaum solves such a problem by substituting a Buddhist ritual with a Catholic one. This constitutes as domesticating a move as any I encountered during my research:

- 枕経を読んだお坊さん。 (389)
- The Buddhist priest who read the pillow sutra. (Literal translation)
- The priest who did the last rites. (205)

Makuragyō is a ritual conducted by a Buddhist priest *after* death has occurred, either in the home of the deceased, at the hospital or later at the temple. The *makuragyō* are supposed to be the first sutras read out after someone dies, to lend guidance to the soul in death. “The last rites”, on the other hand, is a Christian religious ceremony that a priest conducts for and in the presence of a dying person, not *after* death has occurred. Since the *makuragyō* takes place after death, it is not a last rite but actually the beginning of the cycles of memorial rites.³⁶ Furthermore, translating the Japanese お坊さん (*obōsan*) as “priest” is not incorrect in itself, but since priests can also be found in other religions, it is likely that TL readers envision a Catholic priest performing these “last rites”. The remaking of this Buddhist ritual into a

³⁶ <http://fresnobuddhisttemple.org/Funeral%20Information%20-%20Jan%202008.pdf> (page 15)

Christian one is taken even further in the following translation of a passage referring to the same Buddhist priest:

- その坊さんが檀家からお金を騙しとって (389)
- The Buddhist priest swindled and took money off a patron household. (Literal translation)
- ... that same priest embezzled some money from the parish ... (205)

A *danka* is a household that provides a certain Buddhist temple with financial support, while getting spiritual services in return. A “parish”, however, is a geographical area with its own Christian church. Ultimately, there is nothing in the TL text to suggest that this story is about Buddhism at all. “Last rites”, “priest”, and “parish” all allude to Christianity, making the text easy to digest for the TL readers. In my view, this is disrespectful of both Japanese culture and TL readers. Buddhism is a religion in its own right, and references to it should not be Christianized in any way. Moreover, TL readers should not be denied insight into one of the most important aspects of Japanese society.

Christians are only a small minority in Japan, and Christmas is not set aside as a public holiday as in the West. Still, the Japanese have invented their own way of celebrating Christmas, and in *All She Was Worth*, this causes a problem for the translator.

- 「で、婚約したと」
「はい。去年のクリスマス・イブに」
思わず微笑がもれた。ロマンティックなことをしたもんだ。(22)
- ”And you got engaged?”
“Yes, on Christmas Eve last year.”
Honma couldn’t help smiling. It was very romantic, after all. (Literal translation)
- ”And you got engaged?”
“Yes, last Christmas Eve.”
Honma couldn’t help smiling. Some people might even call it corny.

In Japan, Christmas Eve has become a day for couples to show their affection for each other, a romantic evening for dining out, usually at an expensive restaurant, and exchanging Christmas presents. This presents a sharp contrast to the family-orientated Western Christmas.

So when Honma hears that his relative got engaged on Christmas Eve, it is only natural he – thinking of it from a Japanese perspective – smiles and finds it a *romantic* thing to do. The Japanese word for “romantic” is *romanchikku*, a loan word from English, and impossible to misinterpret in translation. So why does Birnbaum choose to substitute it for “corny” in the TL text? The answer can only be that he finds it troublesome to explain the differences between the Western and the Japanese Christmas, opting instead to substitute Honma’s reaction with the expected reaction of someone in the target culture.

Furthermore, the TL text contains a couple of expressions that, being references to Christianity, sound a bit strange when spoken by Japanese characters. These are not translations of similar Japanese expressions, however, so no cultural context adaptation has been at work. The first one is “There but for the grace of God” (203/112), an expression that means “I would likely have experienced or done the same bad thing if God had not been watching over me”.³⁷ The SL text, however, does not refer to divine powers, stating simply that “If the wind had blown in a different direction, something like this could have happened to you and me as well” (literal translation). The other expression is “Lord knows” (258/140), which is also a reference to the Judeo-Christian God that does not appear in the SL text. Since there are only a couple of such expressions in *All She Was Worth*, it is not a major problem, but they seem out of place. If a translation of a novel from a non-Christian country contains many similar expressions, such as “Oh my God”, “God help us all”, “Jesus Christ!”, “For Christ’s sake” etc., then TL readers will get the impression Christianity is part of the social fabric of the SL country, and not, as in the case of Japan, one where Buddhism and Shintoism are the main religions. This misconception should be avoided at all costs.

3.1.2.2 The treatment of personal names and titles in the novel

In general, personal names should not undergo cultural context adaptation. Foreign names might sound unfamiliar and strange to readers who are not accustomed to the SL culture, but this is just part of the experience of reading a novel set in a culture different from your own. The foreignness should be embraced, not seen as an obstacle to fluency.

Four out of the five translations included in this paper keep the Japanese names as they were in the SL text, without alteration of any kind. *All She Was Worth* is the one exception. Although personal names remain Japanese in the novel, many of them are changed from the

³⁷ McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs. © 2002 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

original Japanese name to *another* Japanese name. In most of these cases, the underlying purpose seems to be to prevent the TL readers from being confused by similar-sounding names appearing in the text. The following four names, which all start with the letter “K”, are all changed in the TL version:

- 和也 (Kazuya) → Jun (10/10)
- 一恵 (Kazue) → Yumi (468/241)
- 片瀬 (Katase) → Wada (482/249)
- こずえ (Kozue) → Emi (558/283)

The new names make it easier to distinguish amongst the characters, and at the same time they are relatively easy to both pronounce and remember for TL readers. This substitution of names is clearly an attempt to increase the fluency of the TL text.

Whereas the above names have all been changed to avoid confusion with one another, the following two names seem to have been changed to avoid confusion with a third name, *Isaka*, which is not altered in the TL text:

- 碓貞夫 (Sadao Ikari) → Sadao Funaki (159/87)
- 市木かおり (Kaori Ichigi) → Orié Chino (482/249)

Are the three names *Isaka*, *Ikari*, and *Ichigi* really that difficult to distinguish from one another? *Kazue* and *Kozue* from the first example might cause some confusion for TL readers not familiar with Japanese names, but these three surnames have only the first letter and the number of syllables in common. The decision to change them suggests that Birnbaum – or perhaps his editor – underestimates the TL readers’ ability to remember and distinguish foreign-sounding names. I believe this consideration for the TL readers is not only unnecessary, but it also constitutes a radical deviation from the original text. In addition, it makes it hard for people who have read different versions of the novel to have a meaningful conversation about it.

In the above examples, the motivation behind the name changes seems clear, but there is also a name change in the novel that cannot be explained easily. In the original, the protagonist’s son is called *Satoru*, a common Japanese first name, but in the TL version he is called “Makoto” (8/9). To suggest that Birnbaum simply dislikes the name *Satoru* may be

rather far-fetched, but I can simply find no logical explanation for this move. A restaurant, *Nagatoro*, suffers the same fate, in that it becomes “Nagase” in the TL text (158/86). The one name change that seems justified is “Blockhead” for *Boke*, the name of a pet dog that appears in the novel (123/68). “Blockhead” is a literal translation of the Japanese name, thus the message is carried across to TL readers that the dog might not be the sharpest pet around.

Boke is not the only name to get a cultural makeover in *All She Was Worth*. A couple of nicknames are subjected to the same treatment. *Kacchan* becomes “Kazzy” (12/10), *Micchan* “Mitchie” (49/30), and *Pon-chan* is shortened to “Hon” (561/285). This enables Birnbaum to preserve the sense of intimacy inherent in the *chan* suffix, although in an Anglicised form. When the morphology of the Japanese nickname makes Anglicisation difficult, however, Birnbaum discards the nickname altogether and sticks with the person’s actual first name. For the nicknames *Chiichan*, *Shiichan*, and *Tamo-chan*, he uses “Chizuko” (208/115), “Shoko” (286/154), and “Tamotsu” (294/159) respectively, thus disregarding the connotation of intimacy inherent in the nicknames. A second reference to *Chiichan* (309/167) and a sentence that would have translated into something like “So, you call Shoko-san ‘Shiichan’, do you?” (287/155), are not included at all in the TL text.

Chan is just one of many suffixes the Japanese attach to names to signify respect or intimacy. Another one is *san*, which is the one best known outside Japan. *San* is an honorific suffix used as a mark of respect when talking to or about people who are not in one’s own family or inner circle of friends. *San* is commonly translated into “Mr”, “Mrs”, or “Ms” in English, and this is usually the case in *All She Was Worth* as well. On a couple of occasions, however, Birnbaum opts to use the first name *Shunsuke* in dialogues where the SL text uses *Honma-san*, creating a perceived sense of intimacy that is not present in the original. One example of this is when Honma gets a surprise visit from a distant relative of his deceased wife. In the SL text, the relative, who is the younger of the two, consistently uses *Honma-san* when addressing the detective, suggesting that the two are not very close. In the TL version, however, the relative addresses Honma as “uncle Shunsuke”, suggesting an intimacy that is not to be found in the SL text. The use of the informal “uncle Shunsuke” is extremely misleading, for it makes the two seem closer than they really are.

Overall, Birnbaum seems to find Japanese names and honorifics troublesome. This is evident in the way he changes given names, family names, and nicknames, as well as in the manner in which he deals with the honorifics present in the novel. In addition to the above examples involving *chan* and *san*, the translator also eliminates two sentences that refer to the custom of adding an honorific suffix to a name:

1. 自分の子供のように、呼び捨てにしている (207/114)
2. タモッちゃん、あたしのことは呼び捨てにするけど、彰子さんのことは「しいちゃんって呼びます (309/167)

The keyword in these sentences is 呼び捨て (*yobisute*), which means to address someone using only his or her name and not the name followed by an honorific suffix such as *san* or *chan* or *kun*³⁸. Sentence (1) is Honma's reaction when a colleague talks about Honma's son in *yobisute* manner, and a literal translation would be something like "He drops the honorific suffix like it was his own son (he was talking about)". In sentence (2), a girl says that her boyfriend addresses her in *yobisute* manner, while he has a nickname for his female friend. In my opinion, there is no need to remove either of these sentences. Deliberate rewording would have been enough to preserve the cultural element, with the result not sounding all that awkward. Two possible translations would have been:

1. He didn't add *kun* to Satoru's name, so it felt like he was talking about *his* own son.
2. Tamo-chan doesn't have a nickname for me, he just uses my name as it is. But he's got one for Shoko-san. He calls her "Shii-chan".

Another honorific that often causes problems for translators is *senpai* (先輩), the Japanese term used to address a senior colleague or an older student. In *All She Was Worth*, the sentence 「意地悪な先輩」, which means something like "nasty senpais", is simplified into "bitchy people down the hall" (210/116), presumably to avoid the awkward cultural element. *Senpai*, I feel, is one of those culture-bound words that once explained, can be retained as a loan word throughout the entire novel, thereby adding that foreign touch to the TL version. Moreover, the seniority system is a very important part of Japanese society, so it should not be sacrificed in translation.

Finally, the Japanese do not "spell" their names letter by letter, but rather explain which Chinese characters (*kanji*) they use to write them. In *All She Was Worth* (73/43), an entire conversation about which *kanji* are used to write the name *Shoko* is omitted, again presumably to avoid the cultural element.

³⁸ Informal suffix used when addressing boys and sometimes junior colleagues.

3.1.2.3 Dealing with weights and measures

Although the metric system has been the official system of measurement in Japan since 1924, elements of the old *shakkanhō* (尺貫法) – the traditional Japanese measurement system – are still in use in areas such as carpentry and agriculture. With the United States being one of the few countries in the world not yet to implement the metric system as their official system of measurement, and with the British still using the English standard of yards and miles, the Anglo-American translator does not only have to decide whether or not to convert the aforementioned Japanese *jō* into square meters, but also whether metres should be converted into yards, kilos into pounds, and so on. Translatologist Andrew Chesterman calls this converting of measurement systems into the one predominant in the target language culture as *cultural filtering*. He claims that this strategy makes the text less alien to the readers, thus domesticating it to a certain degree.³⁹

Alfred Birnbaum elects to use the *cultural filtering* alternative in *All She Was Worth*, translating “5 cm” as “a good couple of inches” (14/12), “2-10 metres” as “6-60 feet” (182/101) and so on. Other references to the metric system are deleted altogether. Rewording is used to convert the Japanese calendar into the Gregorian one, but this is less of a problem since the latter is also used in Japan. Rewording is also employed when translating a reference to a room that is 8 *jō* in size: “wide enough to double as a bedroom” (95/54). The logic behind this decision is sound, but slightly misleading since very few Japanese apartments have a separate bedroom in the first place.

3.1.3 Concluding remarks

Of the five novels examined for this thesis, *All She Was Worth* is clearly the most domesticating in terms of cultural context adaptation. Alfred Birnbaum systematically glosses over culture-specific elements, replaces them with elements from the TL culture, and in other instances simply omits them. Buddhist terms are replaced by Christian ones, geographical locations are removed, personal names are changed, and a number of culture-bound words are simplified. In my opinion, this shows a severe lack of faith in TL readers’ ability to digest foreign cultural elements, and a lack of belief in their desire to learn about other cultures through literature. Birnbaum is also guilty of neglecting his own responsibility towards the culture of the SL text, revising it instead to suit the cultural norms of the TL culture. His

³⁹ Chesterman (1997: 108)

decision to replace “romantic” with “corny” in reference to the Christmas Eve engagement is a grave example of this negligence. Where is the harm of informing TL readers that Christmas in Japan is not like Christmas in the West? To quote a passage Venuti wrote in regards to a different text, the translation “invisibly inscribes the foreign text with British and American values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other”.⁴⁰

The translation strategy for *All She Was Worth* most likely focused on achieving a single goal: to make the story as “readable” and sellable as possible. The vast number of culture-specific elements in the original was probably considered an obstacle inhibiting the realization of this aim, and the decision was made to omit, simplify or substitute with equivalents a number of these elements. It could also be argued that the genre of *All She Was Worth* was taken into consideration when the decision was made. Did the translator and/or the publisher assume that readers of detective fiction are more likely than others to find foreign elements in the text intrusive? The fact that the English lexicon and syntax used in the translation bears a close resemblance to the language used in traditional American hard-boiled crime novels, while the language of the Japanese text is much more “plain”, supports this theory. Was it assumed that a hard-boiled style would get a better reception than a style that was closer to the original? As a long-time fan of Raymond Chandler, I have to admit that *All She Was Worth* often reads as well as any of his novels. In short, it is a very entertaining translation. It is my opinion, however, that this readability could have been achieved without the sacrifice of so many cultural elements.

In addition to the cultural elements that have been omitted, several paragraphs and pages containing no such elements are also missing from the TL text. For instance, pages 255-257 have not been translated at all, possibly because the novel was considered too long.

In his second edition of *The Translator’s Invisibility* (2008), Lawrence Venuti comments on the hard-boiled style in *All She Was Worth*, calling it foreignizing in that it highlights the formal and thematic differences in the SL text. “The foreignizing effect can occur within a single sentence when the reader suddenly comes across the juxtaposition of English underworld argot with a Japanese word like ‘yakuza’ (gangster) or ‘Osaka’, an abrupt reminder of the different culture. The language thus frustrates the contemporary expectation that translations should be seamless, written in the most familiar and therefore most invisible form of the translating language”.⁴¹ *All She Was Worth* might be a foreignizing translation in

⁴⁰ Venuti (2008: 12)

⁴¹ Venuti (2008: 163)

that its syntax and lexicon deviate from standard English, but with regards to retaining culture-specific elements it is most assuredly not. I believe Venuti, who does not read Japanese, would agree if he had been able to compare the SL and the TL texts. Retaining “Osaka”, the second biggest city in Japan, can hardly be regarded as daring. Considering that the translator removed a total of 22 geographical names from the original, either through simplification, explanatory translation, or deletion, he deserves no applause for keeping Osaka.

All She Was Worth does make attempts to explain *some* Japanese cultural elements – the long description of the *koseki* system being the one that really stands out – but overall it suffers from the extensive cultural context adaptation that was done during the translation process. Choosing to publish a female crime writer who incorporates social critique and gender issues into her fiction is praiseworthy, and foreignizing in that it introduces to TL readers Japanese literature that challenges stereotypes, but I feel that Birnbaum’s work does not preserve Japanese culture in the way it should have done.

3.2 Batoru Rowaiaru / Battle Royale – Koushun Takami

3.2.1 Background

Koushun Takami’s *Batoru Rowaiaru* (高見 広春, born 1969 – バトル・ロワイアル, 1999) is one of the most controversial novels published in Japan in recent years. Set in an alternate reality where Japan is a fascist state ruling over large parts of Asia, the novel tells the story of 42 junior high school students who are forced to take part in a government program designed to instil fear in the population. On their way to a school trip, the students are kidnapped by the military and shipped to an island where they have to fight one another until only one person is left alive. Although primarily a dystopian suspense novel, *Batoru Rowaiaru* can also be read as an allegory for modern Japanese society, as a critique of the competitive environment in which children grow up. *Batoru Rowaiaru*, which is Koushun Takami’s only novel to date, was hugely successful and has been adapted into two movies and two comic book series. It was translated into English by Yuji Oniki as *Battle Royale* in 2003. It was Oniki’s first literary translation, having already made his name as a translator of manga.

3.2.2 Culture-context adaptation in the translation

Since *Batoru Rowaiaru* takes place in an alternate reality, references to contemporary Japanese culture are scarce. However, there are plenty of references to traditional culture, as well as to religion and food, and there are some difficult challenges related to the Japanese writing system in it as well. Yuji Oniki frequently uses loans and added explanations to preserve culture-bound elements, giving the TL version a more foreign feel than was the case with *All She Was Worth*. Japanese culture is sacrificed, however, when the translator is faced with the challenges related to the writing system, and to a lesser extent, the honorific suffixes that most translators struggle to convey in the TL.

As mentioned above, many culture-bound words are kept as loans in *Battle Royale*. The term *anime*, which in *All She Was Worth* was adapted into “cartoon”, is one of the more well-known words left unadapted (40/41 and 473/439), along with *miso* (320/298), *udon* (379/350), *yakuza* (23/25), and *harakiri* (259/243). The inclusion of these words in the TL text should not raise any eyebrows, however, since they ought to be familiar to many TL readers. Other loans in *Battle Royale* are less common in the English language versions of other Japanese literature though. I feel these words deserve special attention:

Nunchaku (288/268). Martial arts close-combat weapon consisting of two sticks connected in the middle by a rope or a chain. In the Western world, this old Okinawan weapon is known mainly through popular culture, such as martial arts movies. Although included in English dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster, *nunchaku* cannot be regarded as a household word in the TL culture. To keep it as a loan is therefore a bold foreignizing move.

Otaku (473/439). An *otaku* is a term used to refer to people with obsessive interests, particularly video games, manga, and anime. The term is often translated into “nerd” or “geek” in English, but these words do not have the same negative connotations as *otaku* has in Japan. An *otaku* is often perceived as a slightly creepy, perhaps unhealthy young male who rarely leaves his room, whereas for example a geek can be regarded as quite normal except for his obsession with a certain interest. Although *otaku* is slowly gaining a foothold in the English language, many TL readers will still be unfamiliar with the term, making it another bold choice by Oniki. It should be noted, however, that the loanword “otaku” in English does not have the same negative connotations as its Japanese counterpart. In English, an “otaku” is more of a “fan” of something, making it less derogatory than in Japanese.

Chonmage (240/226). A traditional Japanese haircut for men, usually associated with samurai warriors and sumo wrestlers. This is perhaps the most surprising loan found in *Battle Royale*. Using an explanatory translation, such as “samurai-style haircut”, would have been acceptable in this case, since *chonmage* is virtually unknown in English. It does help, however, that hints are given to its meaning elsewhere in the text.

Sarariiman (148/142 and 254/238). Pseudo-English term used in Japan when referring to male white-collar workers. In a certain regard, the term carries slightly negative connotations of working excessive overtime, drinking after work, wage slavery, low status, and death from overwork. On the other hand, the salaryman is the cornerstone of Japanese society, the modern day samurai who keeps everything going. I feel that *sarariiman* is impossible to translate without a considerable loss of meaning, and that it should be used as a loan with the English spelling “salaryman”. In *All She Was Worth*, four different translations were found: “executive”, “office worker”, “company man”, and “management types”, none of which carry the same connotations “salaryman” does in *Battle Royale*.

In addition to the above loans, Yuji Oniki also retains some Japanese words using added explanation. The two geographical names *Kyūshū* and *Honshū*, for example, become “the island of Kyushu” (19/21) and “Honshu mainland” (105/104) respectively, moves that are probably welcomed by TL readers who only have limited knowledge of Japanese geography.

A *shamisen* is a traditional, three-stringed Japanese instrument that in shape resembles a banjo or a guitar. It might not be familiar to all readers of *Battle Royale*, so Oniki’s “Shamisen banjo” (288/268) at least gives these readers an allusion to the instrument’s shape and sound.

As with the aforementioned *anime*, the Japanese word *manga* has gradually established itself within the English lexicon, and is today a widely used term for a Japanese comic book or graphic novel. A *manga* is different from Western comics both in drawing style and narrative techniques, so it is common to differentiate between the two. With this in mind, a cultural context adaptation of *manga* is neither necessary nor advisable; it could simply be kept as a loan. Nevertheless, adaptation is still frequently used in translation, and in these cases an added explanation is the preferable solution. Yuji Oniki has chosen this option, translating the term as “manga magazine” (93/93), and thus making it at least partly clear what a *manga* is about.

The final example of added explanation in the novel is “tatami floor mats” for *tatami* (255/239), an effective adaptation of a term for which there is no English translation.

Although many culture-bound words are retained in *Battle Royale*, some are sacrificed in favour of an explanatory translation or a simplification. I will give a few examples.

The Japanese art form *Ikebana* (活け花) is translated as “flower arrangement” (206/196), a shortened version of the definition found in major English dictionaries. Merriam-Webster, for instance, defines *ikebana* as “Japanese art of flower arranging that emphasizes form and balance”⁴². *Ikebana* as an art form involves more than just arranging flowers to look pretty, so I feel that the explanatory translation “flower arrangement” fails to convey the implicit purpose defining the art. To preserve the reference to this traditional Japanese art form, an added explanation would have been better, like in “Ikebana flower arrangement”. The Japanese word could also have been kept as a loan. It is listed, after all, in the major English dictionaries.

A *torii* (鳥居) is a traditional Japanese gate that is usually found outside Shinto shrines, and sometimes outside Buddhist temples as well. In translation, *torii* is occasionally kept as a loan, and sometimes adapted by using an added explanation, such as “torii gate”. In *Battle Royale*, however, the explanatory translation the translator employs – “Shinto archway” – is somewhat misleading and problematic (124/120). A *torii* is not technically an arch, but a construction consisting of two upright supporting columns with two horizontal bars stretching across the top. The allusion to its function as a gate to the shrine is also lost when “Shinto archway” is used. Thus, I believe that “torii gate” would have been a better choice in this case, especially since it is already clear from the context that the gate is located in front of a Shinto shrine.

Okayu (お粥) is a type of rice porridge or congee that is considerably thicker than similar dishes in other parts of Asia. It is commonly served to the ill, which is also the case in *Battle Royale*. Since the exact same dish does not exist in the TL culture, the best solution would be to use an added explanation in this case, such as “okayu porridge”. This adaptation suggests that *okayu* is similar to Western porridge, but still not quite the same. In *Battle Royale*, however, *okayu* is discarded altogether and the simplification “soup” is used (359/332). There is no mention of rice at all, and “soup” suggests a dish less thick in texture than *okayu*.

As was the case with Alfred Birnbaum, Yuji Oniki is reluctant to keep Japanese honorifics such as *san* and *sensei* as loans, opting instead to use rough equivalents from the TL culture. The two most informal honorifics in Japanese, *kun* and *chan*, are invariably omitted, denying

⁴² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ikebana>

TL readers the connotation of intimacy inherent in these words. What is left is the personal name only, just as in Western cultures.

The gender-neutral *sensei*, an honorific used when addressing or referring to a doctor, a teacher, a professor, or any individual that is considered learned in a certain field, is also sacrificed in *Battle Royale*. It is generally substituted with either one of the rough equivalents – in politeness terms at least – “Mr”, “Mrs” or “Ms”, which corresponds with the usual fate of *san* in translation. This is regrettable, because *sensei* is a very important Japanese cultural word, and known by many outside Japan, mostly through being used to address the teacher in Japanese martial arts classes. On one occasion in *Battle Royale*, Oniki even translates *sensei* as “Ms” without there being any indication of the gender of the teacher in question (27/29).⁴³

The only honorific that is retained at all in the novel is *san*. This only happens, though, when there is a specific reference to the use of it in the original. Below are some examples:

- 「川田さんかあ」と言った。豊は、ほかの何人かのクラスメイト同様、一つ年上の川田をさんづけで呼んでいるようだった。(216)
- ”Kawada-san ...” Yutaka said. Just like many of his classmates he added *san* to the name of the one year older Kawada. (Literal translation)
- “Shogo-san” huh. Just like his classmates Yutaka politely referred to Shogo as Shogo-san. (205)

In this example, the cleverly inserted added explanation “politely” does just enough to convey the connotative value of *san* in Japanese, showing how easily this can be achieved without the TL text sounding awkward as a result. The problem with this translation, however, is that it is an exception, and is not consistently used throughout the novel. Oniki does not include *san* when it is used elsewhere in reference to Shogo Kawada, making “just like his classmates” sound somewhat strange. The same is the case in the following example:

- . . . 典子と—— いや、典子さんだよ、俺、いつから彼女のこと呼び捨てにしているんだ？(498)
- ... with Noriko? I mean, Noriko-san. Since when did I stop adding *san* to her name? (Literal translation)
- ...Noriko? Hey wait, since when did I stop calling her Noriko-san? (461)

⁴³ It is possible, of course, that the translator sought advice from the author or his publishing company about this.

These are the thoughts of the protagonist Shuya Nanahara as he wakes up groggy after taking a knock to the head and passing out. While unconscious, he has a dream in which his classmate Noriko appears, and when he reflects upon this, he forgets to add the *san* to her name, prompting him to wonder since when the two of them had become close enough for him to call her by her first name only. In its own right, this translation is a good one, but as with the previous example, the lack of consistency makes the whole sentence seem odd. In the TL text, Shuya never once calls Noriko “Noriko-san”, except for in the above sentence. Thus his thoughts fail to make any sense.

3.2.2.1 Challenges related to the Japanese writing system

The Japanese writing system, consisting of approximately 2000 Chinese characters, or *kanji*, as well as two sets of Japanese syllabic alphabets, presents a lot of interesting challenges to the Japanese-English translator. Unfortunately, some seem to find the challenges too difficult, and resort to domestication strategies to address references to the writing system.

Of the examined texts, *Battle Royale* is the one with the trickiest references to *kanji*. The translator almost exclusively utilizes the domesticating approach to deal with these references, replacing the Japanese writing system with the Roman alphabet on several occasions:

- 大きく縦に”坂持金発”と自分の名前を買いた。(36)
- He wrote his name vertically, in large *kanji*: “坂持金発” – “Kinpatsu Sakamochi” (Literal translation)
- He wrote his name in large vertical letters. (37)

- “聴”の字は信史が書いたのをまねて書いたようだった。”機”は字が違ったが・・・(336)
- Before writing the “聴” in “monitoring”, he checked how Shinji had written it. For the “機” in “device”, he chose the wrong character altogether. (Literal translation)
- He had copied Shinji’s spelling for monitoring, but “device” was spelled incorrectly. (312)

- 徽章。漢字。そんなん書けるか。(341)
- Insignia. Wonder if I can write the kanji ... (Literal translation)
- *It was an ensine*. Or was it “ensign”? (316)

- *All we have to do is attack the school so they think we might* ugh, another word I can't spell *aniyulate* their data. (341/316)
- Shinji nodded and tried to write out the name of the fertilizer compound, but he didn't know how to spell it. He was a casualty at spellcheck. (341/316)

In all the examples above, *kanji* become letters, and words are spelled as they are in the Roman alphabet. In other words, the cultural element is completely lost in the TL version. In addition to these examples of substitution of an equivalent, the following sentence has been adapted by means of deletion in the TL version:

- 余裕、は漢字で書けると思ったのだが、分からなかった。(337)
- He thought he could write the *kanji* for “afford”, but he couldn't. (Literal translation)

In contrast to these domesticating substitutions and deletions, Oniki has used explanatory translation to deal with references to *kanji* on two occasions. The following SL sentences explain how two of the characters in the novel got their respective nicknames, “Wild Seven” and “The Third Man”:

- 姓の”七”を引っかけて・・・(161)
- ... from the “seven” in his surname ... (Literal translation)
- ... the first kanji character to his last name meant “seven” ... (154)
- ”三村”の姓になぞらえて・・・(170)
- ... from his surname “Mimura” (Literal translation)
- Because of the kanji character of “three” in his last name ... (162)

These explanatory translations work well in conveying the meaning of the SL sentence without sacrificing the cultural element, and I feel a similar approach should have been used throughout the novel.

3.2.3 Concluding remarks

Although words such as *ikebana* and *torii* are omitted in the TL version, there are still enough culture-bound elements kept to suggest that Yuji Oniki to some extent acknowledges his responsibility in preserving the culture of the SL text. The fact that only a couple of examples of deletion were found in the novel, one being a reference to the Kansai dialect (190/181), supports this. Of the five texts examined, *Battle Royale* is the only one to keep *sarariiman* as a loan, and rare words such as *chonmage* and *nunchaku* are also retained. When discussing *All She Was Worth*, I suggested that the genre of a novel might have played a role in determining which translation strategy to adopt. I think this could be the case with *Battle Royale* as well. The publisher, Viz., actually specializes in manga, not literature, and it is conceivable that they expected a young readership for *Battle Royale*, one accustomed to Japanese culture through exposure to manga and anime. This could explain why certain words are kept as loans in the TL version.

In terms of culture preservation, *Battle Royale* has one major flaw. Oniki's hapless attempts at dealing with references to the Japanese writing system stand in stark contrast to his willingness to keep words as loans. Admittedly, these references are difficult to translate, but turning to the Roman alphabet and "spelling" does not provide an adequate solution. In addition to this particular problem, I think that the translation would have benefitted from the retention of relevant honorifics. In the SL text, the students address each other according to their level of intimacy, using the first name, the family name, or a nickname, followed by one of the honorifics *san*, *kun*, or *chan*, or none at all. In the TL text, however, these levels of intimacy are ignored, and the students use first names only throughout the novel. In an e-mail exchange I once had with Koushun Takami, who is a qualified English teacher, the writer expressed disappointment in the consistent use of first names in the translation, saying that he had put a lot of thought into these levels of intimacy in order to clearly define character relationships.

Towards the end of the novel, Yuji Oniki's decision to use first names only generates a problem he failed to anticipate when translating *Battle Royale*. When Hiroki, one of the main characters in the novel, finally finds the girl he has been searching for, Kayoko Kotohiki, he calls her by her first name, and then reflects that "it was probably the first time he had ever called her by her first name" (581/538). This sentence is correctly translated, and Hiroki even refers to the girl as "Kotohiki" throughout the novel. The problem is that the translation is inconsistent with the rest of the novel. Since everyone consistently uses first names, it seems

odd that Hiroki uses the family name of one person only, and then reflects on it when he calls her “Kayoko” for the first time. The translator could have avoided this problem by following the use of names in the SL text.

On a non-cultural-context level, *Battle Royale* unfortunately suffers from less than sufficient proofreading. Errors that should have been spotted and removed during the editing process are scattered throughout the text, giving the impression of a somewhat hastily completed translation. In terms of preserving culture-bound elements, *Battle Royale* does fairly well, but it stands inferior to some of the other translations I examined during my research.

3.3 Umibe no Kafuka / Kafka on the Shore – Haruki Murakami

3.3.1 Background

Haruki Murakami (村上春樹, born 1949) is without question the most famous contemporary Japanese writer, both in Japan and abroad. Since publishing his first novel in 1979, Murakami has won a number of literary prizes, sold millions of books, and is often touted as a future recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. His first novel to be published abroad was *A Wild Sheep Chase* in 1989, and it opened the door for more of his work to be translated into not only English, but many other languages as well.

Like many other novels by Haruki Murakami, *Umibe no Kafuka* (海辺のカフカ, 2002) mixes the real and the fantastic as it alternates in telling the stories of 15-year-old run-away Kafka Tamura and mentally defected old man Nakata. The English translation (*Kafka on the Shore*, 2005) won the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize and The World Fantasy Award, both in 2006. It was translated by Philip Gabriel, an experienced translator who, in addition to other works by Murakami, has translated the works of other distinguished writers, such as Nobel Prize winner Kenzaburo Oe.

3.3.2 Culture-context adaptation in the translation

Umibe no Kafuka contains a large number of culture-bound elements across a wide range of areas. It is particularly heavy with references to literature, food, geographical places, and Japanese society in general. Despite this, the TL version contains only a limited number of

questionable cultural context adaptations, and is characterized instead by all the Japanese words that have been retained as loans, or with an added explanation.

Since much of the story takes place in a library, it is not surprising that *Kafka on the Shore* has the highest number of literary references among the novels I examined. Even though many of these references are likely to be unfamiliar to TL readers, Philip Gabriel makes almost no attempt to perform cultural concept adaptation. Not only are references to well-known writers such as Natsume Soseki (123/63) and Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (85/44) carried straight over from the SL text, but lesser known poets like Wakayama Bokusui, Ishikawa Takuboku, Shiga Naoya (all 75/38), and Ueda Akinari (477/243) are also retained as loans. That being said, though, knowledge of these writers is not essential to understanding the novel, and some of them are likely to be unfamiliar to many SL readers as well.

References to literary works and characters are also kept as loans in *Kafka on the Shore*. The classical Japanese novel *Genji Monogatari* is referred to by its English title *The Tale of Genji* (137/70), and its characters are referred to by their translated names, as in Lady Rokujo, Lady Aoi, and Prince Genji (475/242). On only one occasion – when he adds “Japanese poetry” to explain the loans “tanka” and “haiku” (76/39) – does Gabriel opt to use adaptation to deal with a literary reference. This added explanation is effective in clarifying the meaning of these Japanese words.

In addition to the literary references, many other culture-bound words are also left unadapted in *Kafka on the Shore*:

Proper nouns: Lawson convenience store, Taiyo magazine, Yoshinoya, Chunichi Dragons, NHK, Inoue Yosui, Shikoku, Takamatsu, Hiroshima, Nakano, Chiba, Ichikawa, Tomei, Fujigawa, Chuo Line, Kansai, Edo, Meiji, Taisho, Showa, Heian.

Food: Udon, miso, tofu, ramen, sushi, soba, daikon.

Other nouns: Shamisen, manga, tatami, futon, pachinko, yakuza, samurai, hara-kiri, shiatsu, soapland, love hotel, chome.⁴⁴

Although outnumbered by the loans, the added explanations used in *Kafka on the Shore* also help preserve the foreign flavour of the novel. *Torii*, which in *Battle Royale* was translated as “Shinto archway”, becomes “torii gate” (149/77), *Seiyu* is followed by the clarifying

⁴⁴ *Tatami* is also used with the added explanation “mat”(205/105), *manga* is substituted by the rough equivalent “comic book” on one occasion (410/208), and udon is once simplified through the generic “noodles” (Vol.2: 63/277).

“department store” (Vol. 2: 256/371), *yukata* by “robe” (Vol. 2: 15/253), *furoshiki* by “cloth” (Vol. 2: 129/309), *toro* by “the real expensive part of tuna” (482/483), *tekka* by “tuna roll” (482/483), and the city of *Abashiri* by “up in Hokkaido” (153/79).

I also found several examples of explanatory translation in *Kafka on the Shore*, a couple of which help bridging the cultural gap and making the text more accessible to TL readers. The first one contains a reference to the *tanuki*, the Japanese raccoon dog, an animal with a special place in Japanese folklore:

- 私はタヌキじゃないんだ。 (Vol. 2: 243)
- I am not a *tanuki*. (Literal translation)
- What do you think I am, one of those magical raccoons? (365)

In this case, a literal translation would make no sense to most TL readers, so the decision to go for an explanatory translation is a good one. The key word here is “magical”, which gives us a hint that we are not talking about an ordinary animal. Unfortunately, the overall impression of this translation is marred by the fact that “raccoon” is not the correct translation of *tanuki*. The correct translation would be “raccoon dog” or “Japanese raccoon dog”, of which the former sounds less awkward in translation.

In the next example, the cultural element lies not in one word, but in the whole setting. When the protagonist, Kafka Tamura, arrives in Shikoku, the smallest of the four main islands in Japan, he eats udon noodles in a shop near the station and finds them to be different in texture and more delicious than the udon he has previously eaten in his hometown Tokyo (67/34). To SL readers, this will come as no surprise, since they know that Shikoku is the birthplace of udon in Japan, and that this is where you find the freshest and best-tasting noodles, but TL readers are not likely to know this. To compensate, Gabriel adds “But now I’m in Udon Central - Shikoku” to the text, a simple yet effective way of making sure connotative value of the SL paragraph is not lost in translation.

Bearing in mind that *Kafka on the Shore* is more than 500 pages long in translation, it was surprising to find only a few examples of seemingly deliberate domesticating moves in the novel. Four of these are examples of a substitution of an equivalent/rough equivalent.

In the SL text, when Kafka Tamura gives an account of what he can see from the car when driving on the highway, he lists McDonald’s, Family Mart, Lawson, and Yoshinoya (330). In the TL text, however, he lists McDonald’s, 7-eleven, Yoshinoya, and Denny’s (167). In other words, the two Japanese convenience store chains Family Mart and Lawson have been

replaced by the American chains 7-eleven and Denny's, the latter even being a family restaurant and not a convenience store. Both chains are found in Japan as well, so it is not unrealistic that they could be seen along the highway, but the substitution of Japanese chains for American ones does lead TL readers to assume that Japan is even more Americanized than it really is. TL readers may never have heard of Family Mart or Lawson, but is that really a problem? If Kafka Tamura sees a Lawson, that is what he sees, and not a Denny's.

A reference to Japan's biggest door-to-door delivery service company, *Kuroneko Yamato*, is replaced by the American company FedEx (Vol. 2: 127/309). As with the above example, this substitution reinforces the image of Japan as an Americanized country and should have been avoided. It must be noted, however, that Haruki Murakami himself might have suggested all three substitutions. As was mentioned previously, Murakami once asked for the Japanese family restaurant chain Royal Host to be replaced by Denny's in the English translation, because he feared that American readers would not know the former. This could also have been the case with Kuroneko, Family Mart, and Lawson, although the latter is also kept as a loan on one occasion in the novel.

In the SL text, Kafka Tamura's friend Oshima drives a Mazda Roadster (227), but in the TL text he drives a Mazda Miata (116). The reason for this change is that the car is known by different names in Japan and in the US. A similar case was discussed in a Haruki Murakami symposium in 2006, where Murakami scholar and translator Jay Rubin commented on changing "Nissan Skyline" to "Nissan Infinity G35" in a Murakami short story the participants translated during the symposium: "It is common to change the name of Japanese cars to be sold in the US. If you keep the name Skyline it sounds too feminine and won't sell at all in the US. You need a more masculine name. Skyline is called Nissan Infiniti G35 in the US".⁴⁵ The Norwegian Murakami translator Ika Kaminka disagrees, stressing that the car is part of the image of the owner and should therefore be kept in its original Japanese name.⁴⁶ Although there is valid reason for using the American name for these cars, I must agree with Kaminka. Keeping the original would not only serve as a reminder to TL readers as to where the story is taking place, it would perhaps also rouse their curiosity and inspire them to discover for themselves what model of Nissan or Mazda it refers to.

⁴⁵ Shibata [et al.] (2006: 162 – my translation)

⁴⁶ Shibata [et al.] (2006:171)

As mentioned when discussing *All She Was Worth*, the Japanese do not spell their names to help other people write them, they explain which kanji they use, often referring to other usages of the kanji. On one occasion, the TL text acknowledges this:

- ナカタサトル、どんな字を書くの？(351)
- What characters do you write Satoru Nakata with? (Literal translation)
- What characters do you write your name with? (178)

This is a good translation, I think, so I am not sure why Gabriel opts to use “spelling” the next time he encounters the same challenge:

- 俺ね、星野っていうんだ。中日ドラゴンズのカントクやっていた星野と同じ字。
(437)
- My name’s Hoshino, by the way. Same *kanji* as used by the Hoshino who once coached the Chunichi Dragons. (Literal translation)
- My name’s Hoshino, by the way. Spelled the same as the former manager of the Chunichi Dragons. (222)

Only two cases of simplification were found in the novel:

柿の種 (*kaki no tane*) is a common Japanese snack that is sold separately or in a bag mixed with peanuts. They are crescent-shaped tiny rice crackers usually flavoured with chilli, and are commonly consumed with tea or beer. In *Kafka on the Shore*, *kaki-no-tane* is simplified into “snacks” (Vol. 2: 53/273), presumably because there is no real English translation available. I think retaining the culture-bound word with the aid of an added explanation, such as “kaki-peanut mix” would have been a better option.

Developed in Japan in the 90s as a replacement for the cassette, the MD, or MiniDisc, became a popular audio storage device in Japan, but never managed to gain foothold in the American market. In *Kafka on the Shore*, “Sony MD Walkman” becomes simply a “Walkman” (17/6). To suggest that the reference to the MiniDisc was simplified because it would be unfamiliar to US readers is perhaps being a bit too speculative, but neither can I see any other reason for the translator’s choice. Furthermore, if Murakami wanted to make a point of the MD Walkman being a Sony product, this should have been retained in the TL version.

3.3.3 Concluding remarks

When asked about the translations of his own work, Haruki Murakami once said that he is not very fussy about details. As long as the translations read well and are enjoyable, he is happy. This is somewhat surprising, perhaps, since he himself is extremely concerned with details when translating writers like Raymond Carver and Truman Capote from English to Japanese.⁴⁷ Philip Gabriel seems to agree with Murakami the translator, because *Kafka on the Shore* is a very thorough translation. There are no errors to speak of, and nothing to suggest the translation was rushed in any way. It is possible, however, that extra attention was given to proofreading and editing due to the status of Haruki Murakami in the literary world.

In addressing culture-specific elements, *Kafka on the Shore* goes a long way in preserving Japanese culture. The many loan words in the translation have a distinct foreignizing effect, while added explanation and explanatory translation are also employed to great effect. Moreover, there are no deletions of cultural elements to speak of in the translation.

Besides the unnecessary use of equivalents previously discussed, there are two other aspects of *Kafka on the Shore* I find problematic. One is the use of cultural filtering when dealing with weights and measures. Centimetres become inches, metres become yards, kilos are turned into pounds, Celsius into Fahrenheit, and the monetary unit “cent” is even used on one occasion (Vol.2: 60/276). The other problem is the translator’s tendency to put the words “God” and “Jesus” into the mouths of the characters, which makes them sound rather too non-Japanese in my opinion.

- ありがたいことに – Thank God (90/46)
- 財布がある – My wallet’s there, thank God (142-73)
- 僕はほっと息をつく – Thank God (143-73)
- やれやれ – My God (360-183) / Jesus (Vol.2: 177-333)

Gabriel also uses the Judeo-Christian “God” for the Japanese *kamisama* on several occasions, a practice that I find questionable. Venuti criticizes a similar translation - “God” for “Zeus” – calling it domestication through inscribing the text with translating-language cultural values.⁴⁸ Using the plural “gods” for *kamisama*, as the translator of *Kitchen* does, would have been a better option.

⁴⁷ Murakami/Shibata (2000: 19–20)

⁴⁸ Venuti (2008: 182)

These minor flaws aside, *Kafka on the Shore* can be considered a quite foreignized translation. Though not perfect, it is reasonably successful in preserving the cultural elements of the SL.

3.4 Kicchin / Kitchen – Banana Yoshimoto

3.4.1 Background

Banana Yoshimoto (吉本ばなな, born 1964) published her first novel, *Kicchin* (キッチン), in 1988, becoming an instant star on the Japanese literary scene. *Kicchin* received several literary awards, and has been reprinted many times. Yoshimoto has continued to publish novels and essays, and is today one of the best-known and best-selling contemporary Japanese writers, both in her own country and abroad. The English translation, *Kitchen*, was published in 1993, and received favourable reviews.⁴⁹ The translator, Megan Backus, also received some recognition following the publication of *Kitchen*, which marked her debut as a translator.

Having been brought up by her grandparents, Mikage Sakurai, the young female protagonist of *Kitchen*, finds herself all alone when her grandmother suddenly dies. While struggling to cope with the grief and loneliness, she slowly befriends Yuichi Tanabe, a student who knew Mikage's grandmother from the flower shop where he used to work part-time. Mikage eventually moves in with Yuichi and his transsexual father who goes by the female name Eriko, and gradually her wounds start to heal. However, when Eriko also dies, the illusion of belonging to a family is broken, and Mikage moves out. For a while, she does not have any contact with Yuichi, but this changes toward the end of the novel.

3.4.2 Culture-context adaptation in the translation

Food, as the title suggests, plays a major part in this novel. In total, eleven different Japanese dishes are mentioned in the SL text, and many can be considered virtually unknown in the TL culture. There are also references to Japanese music, religion, and home furnishings in the novel. Megan Backus uses mostly foreignizing techniques in dealing with the culture-bound elements.

⁴⁹ <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE1DD103BF934A25752C0A965958260>

The main challenge for the translator in terms of culture-specific elements is the high number of references to Japanese cuisine. These elements are dealt with as follows:

SL Text	TL Text	Adaptation Method	Page
卵がゆ (Tamago-gayu)	Soupy rice with eggs	Explanatory translation	26/18
おかゆ (Okayu)	Soupy rice	Explanatory translation	29/20
ラーメン (Ramen)	Ramen noodles	Added explanation	56/39
おでん (Oden)	Fish balls in broth	Explanatory translation	68/46
てんぷら (Tempura)	Tempura	Use of a loan	81/58
月見うどん(Tsukimi udon)	Moon-viewing udon	Use of a loan / Explanatory translation	85/61
豆腐 (Tōfu)	Tofu	Use of a loan	87/62
わさび (Wasabi)	Wasabi	Use of a loan	108/78
にくまん (Nikuman)	Meat Buns	Explanatory translation	110/79
そば (Soba)	Soba Noodles	Added explanation	115/83
カツどん (Katsudon)	Katsudon	Use of a loan	122/89
お好み焼き (Okonomiyaki)	Egg and vegetable pancakes	Explanatory translation	137/100

Backus uses three different strategies to deal with the references to Japanese food. A majority of the words are either kept as loans or retained with an added explanation. It is particularly noteworthy that *ramen*, *udon*, and *soba*, which were reduced to the generic “noodles” in *All She Was Worth*, are all retained in *Kitchen*. The rest of the food words are adapted using explanatory translations, albeit with a varying degree of success. *Okayu* is sometimes translated as “soupy rice”, but as I suggested in the chapter on *Battle Royale*, “okayu porridge” would be more appropriate. “Fish balls in broth” as an explanatory translation for *oden* is neither very precise. Fish balls are often found in the Japanese winter dish *oden*, but they are far from the only ingredient. Using an added explanation, such as in “oden hotpot”, would have created a clearer image of what the dish actually is. Finally, translating *okonomiyaki* as “egg and vegetable pancake” is not an ideal solution. *Okonomiyaki* is a Japanese-style pancake containing several different ingredients, often including meat or squid, not just vegetables. Furthermore, including “egg” in the translation is not necessary, since it is one of the main ingredients used in making pancakes anyway.

Although food accounts for most of the culture-specific elements in *Kitchen*, the novel also provides the translator with other challenges worthy of a mention, a couple of which are related to music. The first one is a reference to the singer Momoko Kikuchi (55/38), whose name is kept as a loan in a paragraph that also contains some very positive remarks about her music. Backus has, however, misread the artist's surname, spelling it "Sakuchi" instead of "Kikuchi". Minami Aoyama comments on this in *Eigo ni natta Nippon shousetsu*, writing that the positive remarks made about Sakuchi's music might encourage some readers of the English translation to look for more information on the artist – an artist who, unlike Momoko Kikuchi, does not exist.⁵⁰ This is an unfortunate mistake, however, and the translator's intention was to leave the reference to the Japanese singer unexplained.

In dealing with another reference to music, Backus uses rewording to avoid the cultural element. In a scene where Mikage Sakurai is back in the house where she grew up, the protagonist reflects on the recent death of her grandmother, on how "time stopped in the house when she passed away". She then starts to clean the refrigerator while humming an old song called *Ojiisan no furudokei* – Grandfather's Clock (32/22). The lyrics of this song are not quoted in the text, but any Japanese reader will know that they tell the story of the old clock that faithfully kept time alongside the grandfather for a hundred years before coming to a stop. The humming is most likely triggered by the protagonist's thoughts on how time stopped in the house when her grandmother died, which gives the scene a comical quality that is difficult to reproduce adequately in translation. Backus does not make much of an attempt, going for a rewording that borders on simplification. "Humming *Ojiisan no furudokei*" is simply reduced to "humming a tune", a move which results in the comical element disappearing entirely from the TL version. Portraying the comical aspect poses a difficult challenge, but quoting some of the lyrics in order to convey the scene's somewhat absurd quality might have been a solution.

One of the most difficult aspects of translating from Japanese is dealing with the various levels of politeness in the language. In *Kitchen*, important connotative value regarding Mikage and Eriko's relationship is lost due to this. When the two first meet, Mikage speaks to Eriko using polite language (*desu/masu* form), while the less inhibited Eriko uses informal Japanese. Later in the story, however, they both use informal Japanese in conversation, a shift that indicates that their relationship has become more intimate. This is, unfortunately, lost in

⁵⁰ Aoyama (1996: 13)

translation, meaning that the TL reader misses out on a significant development regarding Mikage's relationship with her new "family".

3.4.3 Concluding remarks

When it comes to food, the English translation of *Kitchen* mostly succeeds in preserving the culture-specific elements, even though a couple of the Japanese dishes would have benefitted from a slightly different translation. The use of loans to deal with other culture-bound words, such as *futon* (135/98) and *obi* (138/100), as well as the use of the added explanations "mat" after *tatami* (47/32) and "gates" after *torii* (130/94), shows that Megan Backus is not afraid to expose the TL reader to foreign words. She also uses the honorific *san* on a couple of occasions (25/17 and 68/46), and even *sensei* in one dialogue (82/58). Venuti comments on this aspect of *Kitchen*, saying that the "many italicized Japanese words scattered throughout the text" contribute in making it a foreignized translation.⁵¹

Although Venuti applauds *Kitchen* for retaining many culture-bound elements, his main praise is reserved for its role in the reformation of the canon of contemporary Japanese fiction. He says that the novel presents an Americanized Japan that runs counter to prevalent Orientalist stereotypes. He also praises Backus for using American colloquialisms that reflect this Americanized Japan.⁵² This view, however, is opposed by The New York Times, which in its book review states that the translator "uses Americanisms that sometimes sound odd coming from the mouths of Japanese characters".⁵³ Personally, I agree with Venuti that the use of American colloquialisms helped to create a clear picture of an Americanized Japan, but in my view it is difficult to tell whether this was a deliberate translation strategy, or just a matter of Backus's own personal writing preferences.

The overall impression of *Kitchen* is slightly marred, unfortunately, by the unnecessary use of domesticating techniques such as simplification, when dealing with certain cultural elements. For instance, the Japanese convenience store chain *Family Mart* is reduced to simply "the store" (68/46), *manga* becomes "comic book" (137/100), while the Japanese game console *Famikon* – as the case was in *All She Was Worth* – is simply rendered as "computer" (137/100). These choices may have made the translation read more fluently, but in the process a certain element of local flavour was lost.

⁵¹ Venuti (1998: 85)

⁵² Venuti (2008: 121)

⁵³ <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/17/books/hold-the-tofu.html>

In conclusion, *Kitchen* is clearly a foreignized translation. The abundance of culture-specific words gives the text a strong Japanese feel, and provide the TL reader with interesting insight into certain aspects of Japanese culture. There are few examples of domesticating techniques, and few deletions of culture-specific elements were found. *Kitchen* proves to be a rather solid translation that largely succeeds in preserving the foreignness of the original.

3.5 Hebi ni Piasu / Snakes and Earrings – Hitomi Kanehara

3.5.1 Background

Hitomi Kanehara (金原ひとみ, born 1983) burst onto the Japanese literary scene with her debut novel *Hebi ni Piasu* (蛇にピアス) in 2003. Only 20 years old when her first novel was published, she earned further acclaim the following year by winning the Akutagawa Prize, one of the most prestigious literary awards in Japan. *Hebi ni Piasu* went on to sell more than one million copies, making Kanehara one of the best-known and most popular writers of her generation. Since her debut, she has published new novels at a rate of one a year, while also seeing *Hebi ni Piasu* translated and published in several other countries. The English translation, *Snakes and Earrings*, was released in 2005 and generally well received.⁵⁴ It was translated by David Karashima, who has since continued to translate Kanehara into English.

Snakes and Earrings tells the story of Lui, a nineteen-year-old Tokyo girl who develops a liking for tattoos, body modification, and SM sex, while at the same time struggling with eating disorders and alcohol addiction. At the centre of Lui's life are two men – her younger boyfriend Ama, and the tattooist Shiba-san. With their dyed hair, piercings and tattoos, these characters represent a lifestyle that is far more interesting to Lui than the conformity of mainstream Japanese society, and the novel follows her as she gradually becomes more and more immersed in their world.

Snakes and Earrings can be read as a commentary on Japanese youth culture in the post-bubble era, and also as a portrait of a new generation Japanese women who are more reluctant to conform to traditional values than previous generations. Ultimately, the underlying themes pervading this novel are the feelings of alienation and emotional detachment, as well as the search for something real in an increasingly superficial world.

⁵⁴ <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/japannew/kanehh.htm>

3.5.2 Culture-context adaptation in the translation

Despite being a rather short novel (120 pages), *Snakes and Earrings* contains a high number of culture-specific words and expressions. Some are related to pop-culture and nightlife, but there are also references to more traditional culture and even mythology. A number of these elements can seem difficult to deal with in translation, but David Karashima does not shirk from these challenges. Rather than omitting or simplifying these culture-specific elements, he attempts instead to preserve Japanese culture by using mostly foreignizing techniques.

In dealing with difficult culture-specific elements, Karashima often elects to use added explanation, thus retaining the foreign word in the TL version. The following represent the most interesting examples of Karashima's application of foreignizing techniques:

Ukiyoe (浮世絵), a genre of Japanese woodblock prints and paintings originating from the 17th century, is translated as “*ukiyoe* woodblock prints” (pg.22/19). By adding “woodblock prints”, the translator is able to keep the foreign element while at the same time explaining its meaning. The added explanation does not seem intrusive in the TL text, so it can be considered a valid application of this. Later in the translation, *ukiyoe* is left as a loan, as it has already been explained upon its initial appearance within the text.

Iyashikei (癒し系) is a tricky word that Karashima addresses through the use of a relatively long added explanation. Originally, the word *iyashikei* was used to describe soothing and mild-mannered TV presenters, usually female, but is now used in a broader sense as well. An “*iyashikei* suutsu”, for instance, is a comfortable suit, and “*iyashikei* ongaku” is soothing music. The sentence in question is as follows:

- パンクなくせに、癒し系。(21)
- Despite being a punk, he had a soothing personality. (Literal translation)
- Ama had the shell of a punk, but from somewhere inside he exuded the air of an *iyashikei* TV personality – someone with the talent to put others at ease. (18)

Considering Karashima's decision to keep *iyashikei*, an SL word that is virtually unknown in the TL culture, the addition of a thorough explanation in order to ensure that the meaning is conveyed to the TL reader can be regarded a necessary one. But a more important question, however, is whether keeping *iyashikei* is advisable in the first place. My interpretation of the SL sentence is that the female protagonist uses *iyashikei* not as an explicit reference to a type of TV presenter, but in a more general sense to describe her boyfriend Ama as having a

soothing personality. Furthermore, the TL sentence comes across as being a somewhat bulky and elaborate translation for a SL sentence that is nothing more than a fleeting thought in the inner monologue of the protagonist.

In most of the texts examined for the purpose of this research there have been very few references to Japanese youth culture. However, *Snakes and Earrings* offers an example of culture context adaptation. The reference is to the youth culture of Tokyo neighbourhood Harajuku, and Karashima again turns to added explanation to deal with it:

- ルイ、パンクとか原宿系とか嫌いじゃん (21)
- Lui, I thought you hated punk and Harajuku styles. (Literal translation)
- I thought you hated all those punks and über-funky Harajuku kids. (18)

The Harajuku area is regarded as the spiritual home of several Japanese subcultures, most notably *Gothic Lolita* and *Visual kei*, and is famous among fashion-conscious people all over the world for the innovative street fashion that is born there. The SL reference is not to one specific subculture or street fashion, but rather to anyone who hangs out in Harajuku and dresses according to the codes of their chosen subculture. The added explanation “über-funky” informs the TL reader that “Harajuku kids” are concerned with fashion, but not which types. Since the subculture connotation is not conveyed, the TL reader could easily get the wrong impression of these “Harajuku kids”, perhaps picturing them as more fashion-conscious in a conventional way. Karashima deserves credit, however, for preserving the reference to Harajuku instead of using domesticating techniques to deal with the culture-bound element.

There is one reference to Japanese mythology in *Snakes and Earrings* – regarding the legend of *garyōtensei* – and this is where the longest added explanation in the TL text is found:

- 画竜点睛の話、知ってる？瞳を描いたら飛んで行っちゃったってやつ
- Do you know the story of *garyōtensei*? The one where the dragon flew away when its eyes were drawn? (Literal translation)
- Have you ever heard the legend of *garyoutensei*? You know, the one where the painter, Choyousou, was painting a white dragon on the walls of the temple? Anyway, when he drew in its eyes, it came to life and flew away to heaven. (72/68)

Though the TL sentence is nearly twice the length of the corresponding sentence in the SL, it serves as another example of how effective an added explanation can be. The culture-specific element is preserved, while the added information ensures that no meaning is lost to the TL reader. Neither does the added explanation seem intrusive or forced, so its use is fully justified.

The only example of cultural context adaptation in the shape of an explanation outside the text found in any of the examined novels was in *Snakes and Earrings*:

- 「猪鹿蝶だ」
「そう。俺、花札とか好きなの」 (35)
- ”An *inoshikacho*,” I said.
“Yeah, I like *hanafuda* cards.” (31)

Hanafuda are playing cards of Japanese origin, used for a variety of games, and *inoshikacho* is a combination of three of these cards. In *Snakes and Earrings*, *inoshikacho* is explained as follows in a footnote: “A prized combination of cards in the game of *hanafuda* comprising a wild boar, deer and butterfly” (31). Other translators might have gone for a substitution of an equivalent in this case, or for simplification or deletion even, but Karashima does not attempt to domesticate these cultural elements, and for that he deserves recognition. “Hanafuda” is dealt with in the text through the added explanation “cards”.

Several Japanese words have been kept as loans in *Snakes and Earrings*, including *futon*, *kimono*, *shichimi*, *yakiniku*, *izakaya* and *furiitaa*. A reference to writer Ryōsuke Akutagawa is also retained without adaptation. The most interesting of these loan words is *furiitaa* (spelt “freeter” in the TL version), a Japanese term coined from the English word “freelancer” and the German word “arbeiter”. A “freeter” is a (usually) young person who chooses not, or is not able, to enter full-time employment after high-school or university, but instead makes a living through low-income part-time employment. For many freeters it is a matter of rejecting the established Japanese norms of lifetime employment and total dedication to one’s employer, choosing instead a way of life that provides more freedom and less pressure to conform. The word “freeter” has no true equivalent in English – neither “freelancer” nor “part-time worker” doing it justice – and I believe that the translator is justified in keeping it as a loan. The inclusion of an added explanation could in this case have resulted in a bulky, unnatural-sounding sentence, while any attempt to simplify or circumvent the culture-bound “freeter” phenomenon would have meant sacrificing a very important and much discussed

aspect of modern Japanese society. In an interview in 2005, David Karashima comments on the use of Japanese words in the translation, stating that “equivalents of some words don't exist in English and if I feel that a direct translation sounds clumsy I might opt to keep the original word”.⁵⁵

The above are all examples of foreignizing techniques, but the TL text also contains a few cases in which domesticating techniques have been put to use. The word *izakaya* for instance – although kept as a loan on one occasion – suffers both simplification and substitution of a rough equivalent in the TL text. An *izakaya* is a combined pub and restaurant that in many ways differ from Western eating and drinking establishments, and thus there is no satisfactory English translation for it. The *izakaya* concept is known, however, in some cities outside Japan as well, particularly in the US, and the Collins English Dictionary even included the word in its 2001 edition. In *Snakes and Earrings*, *izakaya* is translated as “some place” on one occasion, and “pub” on another, the former being an example of simplification, and the latter of substitution of a rough equivalent. No significant meaning is sacrificed in these examples, but a good opportunity to remind the TL reader that the story is taking place in a foreign environment is lost.

Another example of a cultural element lost in translation in *Snakes and Earrings* is the use of a rough equivalent when translating the phrase “sōpu de hataraku” (84). Literally, this translates as “work in a soapland”, a soapland being a kind of brothel where male customers are washed by female workers as part of the service. The rough equivalent “work as a prostitute” (81) provides no allusion to the environment in which the work takes place, nor does it include the cultural element. An added explanation, such as “sell your body at a soapland,” would perhaps have been a better solution in this case. In *Kafka on the Shore*, “soapland” is kept as a loan (Vol. 2: 69/280), although in this case the implied meaning should be clear from the context.

3.5.3 Concluding remarks

Overall, *Snakes and Earrings* is a foreignizing translation. The amount of Japanese words that are either kept as a loan or adapted through the use of an added explanation gives the novel a distinctively foreign feel, while also enriching the reader's understanding of Japanese culture. Each one of these Japanese words serves as a little reminder as to where the story is taking place, bringing the TL reader closer to the SL culture.

⁵⁵ http://www.breaktech.net/EmergingWritersForum/View_Interview.aspx?id=138

It is worth noting that David Karashima has chosen to keep the honorific “san” that accompanies the name of the tattooist Shiba in the original. This honorific is more often than not dropped entirely in English language translations of Japanese novels, so I find it refreshing that it is retained in *Snakes and Earrings*. Moreover, the fact that Lui keeps adding “san” to Shiba’s name long after they start having a relationship suggests reluctance on her part to become too emotionally involved with him. This connotation may be lost on many TL readers even *with* the “san” attached, but it most assuredly would be lost without it. Shiba-san eventually confronts Lui with her consistent use of “san”, giving the translator a challenge he would have been unable to address had he not decided to retain the honorific in the first place:

- お前さあ、そろそろさん付けで呼ぶのやめない？ (107)
- Don’t you think it’s about time you dropped the ‘san’? (107)

Shiba’s statement suggests that he is ready to take the relationship a step further, and this connotative value is successfully conveyed in the TL translation as well (at least to readers who have a basic knowledge of Japanese language and culture).

Finally, there is no conversion of weight and measurement values in *Snakes and Earrings*. The metric scale is used without exception. This is also a foreignizing technique.

Snakes and Earrings is a challenging and rewarding translation. It is highly successful in preserving and conveying Japanese culture-specific elements, largely refusing the temptation to increase fluency through the use of domesticating techniques.

4. Summary and conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze how culture-specific elements are treated in English translations of contemporary Japanese novels. Do translators sacrifice culture-bound elements in favour of creating a natural sounding, fluent narrative, or do they use loans and adaptation techniques that preserve a sense of the foreign in the translation? Does the domesticating approach constitute the norm in Japanese-English translation, or do translators emulate Venuti in choosing a more foreignizing path?

To address these issues I have used Göte Klingberg’s *ways to effect cultural context adaptation*, a set of techniques translators can use when faced with culture-specific elements. Of these techniques, added explanation and explanation outside the text are the most foreignizing in nature, with rewording and explanatory translation standing as acceptable

alternatives. Simplification, deletion, and substitution of an equivalent/rough equivalent, on the other hand, can be considered domesticating. Employing these techniques essentially sacrifices culture-specific concepts. In conducting my research, I found numerous examples of both foreignizing and domesticating techniques. Some, such as added explanation and simplification, were used frequently, while others such as rewording and explanation outside the text were less common. Each of the translators also kept a significant number of Japanese words as loans.

When I first started reading Japanese literature in translation, I felt like something was missing. The stories were Japanese, but seemed to have been passed through a Western filter during the translation process. Most of these novels were from the golden age of Japanese literature in translation, from a pre-globalization era when preserving the foreign might have been on neither the translator nor the publisher's agenda. The most blatant example of a domesticating translation from this era is Edward Seidensticker's translation of Yasunari Kawabata's *Izu no Odoriko* (translated in 1952 as *The Izu Dancer*). In this translation, Seidensticker famously omits passages that describe the protagonist as having ideological values similar to those prominent in pre-war and war-time Japan, creating instead a protagonist who symbolizes a passive Japan in need of American management in the post war period.⁵⁶ Seidensticker also eliminates passages that could be considered politically incorrect by the TL readership: "Removal of the passages undercutting class differences and gender discrimination may have been motivated by a wish on the part of the translator, conscious or unconscious, to make the novel more ideologically 'agreeable' for the Western readers"⁵⁷. The world has, however, moved forward since the 1950s and '60s, and so has the field of translation studies. I was therefore cautiously optimistic when I started doing research for this paper. I did not anticipate a complete shift in attitude – from an aggressive domesticating approach to an equally thorough foreignizing one – but it was my hope that some progression had been made over the past decade or so. In the end, I think my research demonstrates that contemporary translators of Japanese fiction are reasonably concerned with preserving Japanese culture-specific elements. They are willing to retain Japanese culture-bound words either as loans or through the use of added explanations, and they are also reluctant to simplify, delete, and introduce aspects of the TL culture in the text. Though naturally there are exceptions in each of the novels examined, overall the translation of Japanese fiction seems to be heading in the right direction. *All She Was Worth* is the one novel that largely fails to retain

⁵⁶ Jaques (2002: 15)

⁵⁷ Auestad (1998: 38)

Japanese culture-specific elements, and stands out as the translation that deviates furthest from the SL text. While not as controversial as his translation of *Hitsuji wo meguru boken*, Alfred Birnbaum's frequent use of deletion, simplification, and substitution of an equivalent to circumvent culture-specific elements represents an approach to translation that I had hoped I would not encounter during the course of my research. Could it be that the translator, having lived in Japan from a very young age, underestimates the ability of TL readers to understand the culture of Japan he himself takes for granted? Having said that, while I am critical of the decisions Birnbaum made when translating the SL text, his role in transforming the canon of Japanese literature available in the West must not be forgotten. Not only was he the editor behind *Monkey Brain Sushi*, he also played a major part in helping to introduce Haruki Murakami to the English-speaking world. As a translator, however, I think he is far too flippant when it comes to preserving the culture of his adopted country within his own translations.

Among the other four translators, David Karashima is perhaps the most foreignizing in his approach. *Snakes and Earrings* rarely sacrifices any culture-specific elements, seldom employs cultural filtering, and even retains the honorific *san* on select occasions in acknowledgment of its connotative value. This approach exposes TL readers to cultural differences and helps promote cultural understanding. Megan Backus comes close to Karashima, but food references apart; *Kitchen* is not as heavily laden with culture-bound words as *Snakes and Earrings*. Backus particularly deserves credit for being the only one of the translators to retain *sensei* in the TL text. Philip Gabriel's *Kafka on the Shore* is also a foreignized translation. It contains a high number of loans, and more importantly, Gabriel completely abstained from employing deletion when dealing with culture-bound words. The quality of the translation is slightly diminished by the introduction of some unnecessary equivalents, the use of cultural filtering, and by some out-of-place references to the Christian God. However, considering the length of this massive novel (505 pages in translation), there are not many traces of domestication present. Yuji Oniki also keeps quite a few culture-bound words as loans in *Battle Royale*, but he sacrifices a few as well. He also domesticates the writing system and the Japanese honorifics, leaving the impression that he is not quite willing to embrace the foreignizing approach.

I think the apparent change in attitude among translators of Japanese fiction is directly attributed to the fact that society has become increasingly global. In the 1950s and 60s, people knew very little about Japanese culture, something that undeniably influenced decisions translators and editors at the time made when bringing a work to the English language

audience. They were compelled to ignore cultural differences in order to generate reader interest. Modern-day translators, however, are aware of the impact Japanese culture has had on the West over the past couple of decades, and they know that many Japanese culture-specific words are already known to the average TL reader. Japanese food, electronics, and popular culture have gained a strong foothold in the West, and so has the terminology used to describe them. This makes it easier for translators to retain culture-specific elements, and to make authoritative choices regarding translation strategies. It could well be that Birnbaum, who is one of the older translators of Japanese fiction still active, has failed to embrace this shift.

Despite the fact that four of the five translations analyzed in this study contain more foreignizing than domesticating elements, there is still room for improvement. Considering the increased interest in Japanese culture abroad, I think that even more culture-specific words can be retained in translation without confusing or distracting TL readers. Concepts such as *salaryman*, *freeter*, *sensei*, *izakaya*, and many others might be relatively unknown in the TL culture now, but this does not mean they are incomprehensible. They can easily be understood in context. Terms like these are not only essential in understanding Japanese culture, but they can both broaden the reader's mind and ensure a reading experience closer to that of a SL reader. There should be no need to simplify them, or replace them with TL equivalents.

It is also my belief that honorifics such as *san*, *kun*, and *chan* should be retained in translation, at least in dialogue. Without these words, TL readers can never quite fully understand the importance of age and social status in Japanese society. Honorifics quickly remind us of the fact that the story takes place not in the TL reader's own cultural sphere, but in a country where different social constructs govern human interaction.

Twenty years ago, a radical and foreignizing translation might have run the risk of alienating readers, making the text less accessible to a broad audience and thus failing altogether to promote cultural understanding. In the globalized world of today, however, I think the risk of that happening is relatively small.

So what does the future hold for Japanese literature in translation? I believe foreignizing translations will become the recognized standard, and that these texts will go even further than recent translations to retain culture-specific elements. Modern readers – children of the information age – should have enough prior knowledge of Japanese culture to not only accept a foreignized translation, but to expect it. I think future readers will react negatively to a translation if they are not able to sense the foreign, if they do not feel that the text transports them into the SL culture. This development, I think, will be aided by the increased influence

of Lawrence Venuti's ideas regarding translation. Edwin Gentzler writes: "...Venuti's international following is quite strong, particularly in Europe and Latin America. The publishing industry in United States, which currently is increasingly open to finding new ways to introduce cultural difference into Anglo-American society, will soon follow. They are already experimenting with new forms of presenting translations, including using additional supplementary material such as prefaces, introductions, interviews, footnotes, to help the readers adjust to the foreign ideas and structures".⁵⁸

Finally, it is my hope that the various challenges related to the translation of Japanese literature will receive a great deal more attention in the future. The role of the translation as a vehicle for promoting cultural understanding, and its impact when cultural stereotypes are formed, needs to be further examined and evaluated. Presently the translator's choices for handling each respective instance of culture-specific elements within the SL text are only occasionally commented on, and very rarely studied in detail. This lack of both attention and constructive criticism leaves the translator free to do as he or she pleases. As a result, they are prone to create texts that are ethnocentric and domesticating; infusing the translation with the cultural values of the target culture. By closely scrutinizing the role of the translator, such translations might one day become an object of the past.

⁵⁸ Gentzler (2001: 42–43)

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Abstract

No matter which languages a literary translator handles, he or she is bound to encounter words that represent objects or concepts specific to the source language culture. In most instances, such an element will be unknown in the target language, and thus pose a difficulty for the translator. When confronted with this dilemma, the translator is forced to make a choice: preserve the culture-specific element and bring readers closer to the source language culture, or utilize cultural context adaptation techniques within the translation in order to diminish the cultural differences between the source and the target languages. The strategy of preservation represents what translation studies scholar Lawrence Venuti calls the foreignizing approach, while the strategy of removing cultural differences constitutes the opposite way of thinking – the domesticating approach. In this study, I have looked at how five different literary translators have dealt with such culture-specific elements when translating from Japanese to English.